The Guardian



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Raids foil IRA bomb attacks

Guardian Reporters

THE IRA's plans to demonstrate its still-murderous capacity with a series of spectacular attacks were set back this week after police and the intelligence services dealt the heaviest blow for years to the organisation.

The scale of Monday's police operation, which left one terrorist suspect dead and five others under arrest with the seizure of the largest explosives and arms cache in mainland Britain, indicates the IRA was gearing up for another phase in its war to remove Britain from Ireland.

Ten tons of home-made fertiliser-based explosive packed in boxes were found in a north London warehouse with an array of bomb-making equipment including car bombs, Semtex, 10 timers, and two lorries.

Police said they had frustrated an attack that could have taken place "today or tomorrow". The presence of under-vehicle booby trap bombs also suggests the IRA was preparing to widen its attacks to prominent politicians or establishment figures.

Security sources on both sides of the Irish border have claimed the IRA is about to hold an Army Convention, its ruling body. This could take far-reaching decisions about the direction of its campaign.

The optimistic assessment is that those in the republican movement who favour an abeyance of IRA activity were gaining the upper hand. However, it has been thought the IRA would call a ceasefire only from a position of strength — after having provided high-profile evidence of its continued capacity to mount terrorist operations.

The Prime Minister was "absolutely delighted" by the operation. "The discovery of these plans and the huge stocks of explosives and arms put in their proper context professions of peaceful intentions by Sinn Fein's leaders and speculation about a new IRA ceasefire," he said.

Although surveillance was crucial, this week's success raises the spectre of penetration of the IRA's England Department, which runs bombing from Dublin. Since the IRA ended its ceasefire in February it has been dogged by arrests, premature explosions, arms seizures and bombs failing to go off.

Officers were staggered at the size of the "quartermaster's stores". There were enough explosives and equipment to make five or six van bombs similar to those that wrecked South Quay in London's Docklands, and Manchester city centre on June 15. Three rifles, two handguns and ammunition were also recovered.

Homes in London and another in Sussex were raided by officers from Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch. At a hostel in Hammersmith, west London, a man was killed when shots were fired. Two other suspects were arrested nearby. At London's Gatwick airport a British Airways engineer was seized and an address in Crawley, Sussex, searched.

Three of those arrested are English and two are from Northern Ireland.



Police wearing gas masks follow a trail of blood at a west London house where an IRA suspect was shot dead PHOTOGRAPH: MAX NASH

Lorry sale tip-off put MI5 on the scent

THE successful security and police operation which led to Monday's arrests began when the Royal Ulster Constabulary tipped off MI5 about two lorries, believed to have been bought at auction in Ireland, *writes Richard Norton-Taylor*.

The lorries were tracked from South Armagh to Larne and the ferry to Cairnryan in Scotland, said intelligence sources. The IRA had used the same route for the modified low-loader containing the bomb which exploded at London's Docklands in February this year, marking the end of the IRA's 17-month ceasefire.

Once the trucks arrived in Scotland, MI5 watchers took control. As well as the RUC and Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch, another 10 police forces were involved. They tracked the lorries to north London, where the terrorists had paid cash to rent a steel room at Abacus Self Storage in Hornsey Vale.

The IRA suspects visited it, usually at night, unaware they were being watched for two months. It was at the self-service warehouse that the cache of arms and explosives was found.

Though surveillance was the key to the operation, there is speculation that the security services were originally tipped off by a mole. Republican sources in west Belfast said they suspected an informer. But the IRA would not admit sloppy work by their members.

The IRA, concerned about past reverses, is believed to have taken the risk of turning to experienced members to train recruits. They are more likely to be known to the security and intelligence services.

Massive vote-rigging taints Bosnia election

Julian Borger in Sarajevo

THE international organisation supervising the Bosnian elections is attempting to cover up wholesale fraud involving an estimated 600,000 phantom votes, according to preliminary results that call into question the apparent victory of the Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegovic.

His margin of victory of 41,000 votes over the Bosnian Serb separatist, Momcilo Krajisnik, is dwarfed by the scale of voting discrepancies, the greatest of which are in predominantly Muslim areas.

Independent election monitors have called for the elections to be declared null and void after initial returns showed 7 per cent more votes cast than estimated voters. Western observers say the figures suggest either cheating during the count, or — more likely — ballot-stuffing on a vast scale.

However, if the election results were nullified, or if Mr Krajisnik were declared the victor, Western strategy in Bosnia would go into a tailspin because:

❑ Bosnia's Muslims would refuse to accept Mr Krajisnik as head of state, as he helped orchestrate Serb ethnic cleansing during the Bosnian war.

❑ New government institutions could not be created, under the Dayton peace agreement, unless the whole election process — campaign, polling day count and results — is certified by the chairman of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

❑ Non-approval could postpone by months the drawdown of US-led Nato troops, presenting President Clinton with a foreign policy fiasco weeks before the US presidential elections in November.

The OSCE, which is supervising the election and the count, has been under constant US pressure to play down evidence of fraud.

The head of the OSCE mission in Sarajevo is Robert Frowick, a US diplomat. Over the past month, the press department in the Bosnian capital has been gradually packed with US officials, while their European counterparts have been sent home or demoted, in effect making the OSCE press office an extension of the American embassy.

Election observers believe the most likely source of fraud was large-scale ballot-stuffing. Unlike earlier internationally supervised elections in Namibia and Cambodia, there was only one international supervising team in Bosnia for every eight polling stations. "When the polls closed, about 70 per cent of the polling stations were totally unsupervised, and under control of the LECs [local election commissions]," one Western observer said.

"There are serious discrepancies across the country but the worst fraud appears to have been in mainly Muslim areas. An OSCE source said that in central Sarajevo, 30,000 votes appear to have been cast on behalf of dead or missing Muslims. The number of voters is also suspiciously high around the Muslim town of Bihac.

The head of the International Crisis Group office in Sarajevo, Sir Terence Clark, said on Monday: "We call on the OSCE to explain the discrepancies and if it can only be explained by fraud, then they should declare the elections null and void."

The OSCE argued there was no direct proof of fraud. Jeff Fischer, the organisation's elections director, said the turnout appeared high because the original estimate for the total electorate — 2.9 million — had been too low. The OSCE has revised the figure upwards to 3.2 million.

The revised OSCE electorate figure defies demographic logic. It makes allowance for new voters coming of age since the 1990 election, but radically revises downwards the war's death toll. It suggests there are 200,000 more voters now than in 1990. "It's as if nobody died at all throughout the entire war," a UN analyst said.

At least 580,000 refugees are known not to have voted. Based on the polling day observations of international monitors, the document assumes an 80 per cent turnout of Bosnians still in Bosnia, but concedes this "is probably higher than the real turnout". If 80 per cent of Bosnia's voters had cast their ballots, the maximum number of voters would have been 1.89 million — 600,000 less than the actual number of ballots cast, which was officially reported as 2.52 million.

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Poll charade, page 10

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Arkan: I am not a Serb war criminal

I WRITE in reply to certain matters raised by Julian Borger (Spectre of Karadzic hangs over poll, September 15).

Let me deal first with the statement (not simply an allegation) that I am a war criminal — he calls me "one of the most notorious Serb ethnic cleansers of the war". This is not the place in which to justify in detail my activities in Croatia and Bosnia, but I would point out to your readers that, principally because of the American hostility to those activities in defence of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, I have been investigated by the prosecutor's office of the International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague. The result is that I have not been indicted for any war crime nor, as I understand it, is it the intention of the prosecutor that I should be so indicted.

During the second world war, hundreds of thousands of Serbs were killed by the nationalist regime ("Ustashe") then in power in Croatia. When Croatia declared independence from the former Yugoslavia in June 1991, many Serbs feared a repetition of those events at the hands of the new regime in Croatia, widely regarded as similarly nationalist. President Tudjman has done and continues to do much to foster this feeling, and the independent evidence of the persecution of Serbs in Croatia by the Tudjman regime is formidable. Take, for example, the latest US State Department report on human rights in Croatia, published in March 1996. In my view, the Serbs were entitled to defend themselves against "ethnic cleansing" by Croatia, and, in supporting their cause, I was helping to defend my people.

As regards Bosnia, there was widespread feeling among Serbs when the declaration of independence took place that they were being forced into an Islamic-run state. President Izetbegovic had, in Tito's time, been imprisoned following publication of his "Islamic Declaration" — a thesis on the creation of an Islamic state. He, like Tudjman, has done little to disabuse the Serbs of this fear. As Dr Owen states in his book Balkan Odyssey, Izetbegovic knew that his declaration of independence would lead to bloodshed and his party, the SDA, became even more intolerant under the pressures of war.

Yes, I am a Serb and proud of it, and of the Serb heritage. It is also true that my party, the Serbian Unity Party, advocates the development of closer links with Serbia. The Serbs, after all, fought two world wars on the winning side in order to ensure the security which a constitutional connection with Serbia would guarantee. Contrary to common perception in the West, however, there are still non-Serb minorities living in Republika Srpska — Muslims, Croats, Hungarians, Albanians, Jews, Gypsies. I do not suggest that their numbers are large proportionally to Serbs but I welcome their continuing presence. A great many of these people support and are members of my party, surely an indication that they do not regard me as an extreme nationalist.

These people are supporters of the old, united, ethnically mixed Yugoslavia who went to live side by side with their Serb neighbours. They recognise that the mainstream political parties presently operating in Bosnia, the Muslim SDA, the Croatian HDZ and Serbian SDS, are nationalist parties which cannot represent their viewpoint. They also recognise that my policy advocating the development of close links with Serbia — currently the most multiethnic of all the former Yugoslav republics — far from demonstrating a wish to cleanse them from Republika Srpska indicates ethnic tolerance and a respect for other religious and ethnic groups.

It is for this reason that, quite contrary to the impression given by Mr Borger, my party's platform is far more in the spirit of the Dayton accord than any of the mainstream parties and entirely worthy of funding by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

That is not to say, however, that Bosnia should not be partitioned. It has always seemed to me naive of the Americans if they thought that by hammering out the Dayton agreement, and dividing Bosnia 49 per cent to 51 per cent between Republika Srpska and the Muslim-Croat Federation, they were not, in fact, reinforcing partition.

I do not believe that, in reality, Serbs can live in a state governed by Muslim and Croat nationalists or even work in a government alongside such people. That is the legacy of Bosnian politics before the Serbian Unity Party was created and, if I am right, the resulting partition is no more my responsibility than the initiation of the wars fought in Croatia and Bosnia during the last five years.

Zeljko Raznatovic-Arkan,
President, Serbian Unity Party,
Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Immigration is a policy issue

MARTIN WOOLLACOTT (Immigration and a modern conundrum, September 1) writes: "For the committed Christian and for certain kinds of anti-racist liberal, the question of policy is secondary." I consider myself both Christian and liberal and I can assure Mr Woollacott that the policy of Western capitalist nations is very much my first consideration.

I agree with him that immigration is a major problem, but our Western policies are the major cause of that problem. We control commodity prices, we back corrupt governments who support the West and we make a vast profit from our sale of guns to these same governments.

A case in point is Costa Rica, until a few years ago the only nation in South America without a large military force, and little underlying poverty as most people had some land of their own. Western agribusiness decided, however, that I need strawberries at Christmas. Peasants were cleared from their land with the use of guns and corruption. They drifted to the city, real poverty appeared and they now join the drift northwards as illegal immigrants.

I agree that Mexicans should live in Mexico, the Kurds in Kurdistan (if such a country were allowed to exist, another "policy" decision) and Pakistanis in Pakistan. Let us change our policies and make it possible for these people to live in their own lands.

Jean M Gittins,
Don Mills, Ontario, Canada

I HAVE been following with keen interest the stories about the Nazi gold hidden in Swiss banks.

But what about the cost of lootings undertaken by the West against Africa over centuries? What about asking the Bank of England to reveal the total amount of Commonwealth assets being kept in their custody. Or how much rulers like Mobutu of Zaire, Eyadema of Togo and the rest of them are keeping in the same Swiss banks?

L G K Ocloo,
London

Humbug plagues test ban treaty

AT THE recent South Pacific Forum in the Marshall Islands, Sir Julius Chan called for the strengthening of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty by banning the transit of nuclear weapons. This was its original formulation until watered down by Australia in favour of United States nuclear interests.

Once again Australia has played its pro-US card by voting against Sir Julius's proposal. Of what worth now are our much vaunted anti-nuclear credentials? Australia condemns India, China and Pakistan for resisting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) but fails to criticise the US for its recent $117 million purchase of an IBM super-computer to enable it to conduct immensely sophisticated virtual nuclear tests even though it is a signatory to the CTBT.

Less sophisticated nuclear weapon states interpret the push for a CTBT as a narrow, self-serving strategy by advanced nuclear weapon states, to lock in their nuclear weapon superiority.

If the total elimination of nuclear weapons is considered utopian, then at least let us have a treaty which bans real and virtual nuclear tests; anything less is hypocrisy of a very high order which endangers us all

Gareth W R Smith,
O'Connor, ACT, Australia

Punishment that fits the crime

I READ of the terrible collective rape of the Japanese student (September 15) and felt rage, heartbreak and frustration. Rage at the men who committed such a savage crime; heartbreak for the woman; and frustration at the immorality of a legal system that gives such inadequate sentences to rapists. This legal system makes it clear what the relative value of men is compared to women and children.

There is a serious discrepancy in sentencing men and women for crimes. Insultingly paltry sentences are given to men who rape women and children, while at the same time hundreds of non-violent women are incarcerated for merely defaulting on fines or for non-payment of TV licences.

Men who manipulate, trick or force women and children to have sex with them should not be executed or castrated, as is sometimes suggested, because the state should not partake in murder, and castration will not necessarily prevent men from harming others.

If men shatter others' lives with sexual violence they should lose their right to liberty and receive a sentence which reflects the life-long damage they have inflicted upon their victim, that is, they should lose their liberty until the day they die.

Julie Stapleton,
Hyogo, Japan

Briefly

PRIESTLY celibacy is not at all as "seamy" as you suggest (Comment, September 22). As one of the many who, despite the constant struggle, have found deep personal fulfilment in my priesthood, I would oppose any change in the law.

The gulf is not between the Pontiff and the vast body of the Church, as you say, but between a Church committed to fostering permanence in the Christian values of virginity, marriage, love, sexuality and a society that has lost its way and its self-respect in these matters. That is the gap the Catholic Church must bridge. God help it.

(Father) John Buckley,
Bishop's Waltham, Southampton

YOUR claim that priests living on their own tend to be lonely is strange in view of the record number of people (myself included) now voluntarily living on their own and perfectly content with their lot.

Secondly, marriage is hardly a panacea for priests' illicit affairs: adultery is now at record levels among *married* people.

R S Musgrave,
Framwellgate Moor, Durham

BRILLAT-SAVARIN did not write La Philosophie du Gout, but La Physiologie du Gout (Matthew Fort's review of Food In England, September 15). His contemporary, Sade, did write La Philosophie dans le Boudoir. It's an understandable confusion: what Mr Fort says of Brillat-Savarin applies more accurately to the Divin Marquis.

As for food in England, isn't that the answer to your Query about the topic easiest to master without spending time in the library?

Philippe Ranger,
Montreal, Canada

JOHN DURST (September 15) says it takes two weeks for the Guardian Weekly to reach his Italian address. Our *postina* — journeying 10km in her four-wheel-drive Fiat — has just delivered our Guardian Weekly dated September 15 on the 14th of the month!

Mary Marggraf-Lavery,
Costa San Severo, Camerino, Italy

I WAS deeply disappointed to see the Guardian Weekly peddle misinformation about the European Court of Human Rights by labelling it a European Union court (September 15). Surely the editors know that the court was set up by the Council of Europe, which comprises all European democracies, not only European Union members? It has a long and noble tradition in maintaining human rights standards in Europe, without the EC or EU ever playing any role in it.

Jon Ivar Skullerud,
Adelaide, Australia

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PAKISTANI Muslims offer a funeral prayer for some of the victims of a shooting at a Multan mosque on Monday. Troops were patrolling the city after at least 21 Sunni Muslim worshippers were killed in a massacre by gunmen believed to be from a Shia group, *writes Phil Goodwin in Islamabad*.

Four men walked into the mosque just before dawn, as prayers were about to start. They opened fire with automatic weapons for several minutes before escaping in a waiting car.

Ten people were killed instantly, and many others — most of them under the age of 16 — were seriously injured. The victims reportedly included boys studying at a Koranic school attached to the mosque.

The Pakistani government announced that two men had been arrested. But within an hour of the mosque victims' funerals, presumed Sunni vigilantes exacted their own vengeance: 90km away, near the town of Bahawalpur, a senior figure in the hardline Shia Tehrik-i-Jafria Pakistan (TJP) was killed.

It was the killing at the weekend of another Shia leader in the area that prompted the attack on the Sunni mosque.

The killings follow months of shootings at religious gatherings, between Sunni and Shia gangs.

Pakistan's mainly Sunni population of 130 million has a Shia minority of 15 per cent.

PHOTO: RAPH ASIM TANVIR

Benazir's brother killed in shoot-out

Phil Goodwin in Islamabad and Reuter

MURTAZA BHUTTO, the only remaining brother of the Pakistani prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, was killed in a gun battle with police in Karachi last week.

Murtaza, aged 42, who was estranged from his sister, was pronounced dead at Karachi's private Mideast hospital after doctors vainly tried to save his life. He leaves a wife and son, and a daughter from a previous marriage.

It was the latest tragic chapter in the turbulent history of Pakistan's foremost political family. Their father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was deposed by General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq in 1977 and hanged two years later. Ms Bhutto's other, younger, brother, Shah Nawaz, died in mysterious circumstances — poisoning was suspected — at his home in the south of France in 1985.

In the clash in Karachi, six members of Murtaza's breakaway Shaheed Bhutto faction of the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) died instantly.

The police said the incident occurred when the cars in which Murtaza's supporters were travelling failed to halt for checks.

They said Murtaza's followers, who were returning from a party in three cars, fired first when asked to stop. The police returned fire, killing six people, all members of Murtaza's faction, the deputy inspector general of police, Shoaib Suddle, said.

Five people, including two police officers, were injured in the clash in the exclusive seaside Clifton district.

The police said they had insisted on checking the vehicles because of tightened security after three bomb blasts in the city earlier last week, in which one person was killed and at least three were wounded.

Hours before his death, Murtaza denied that his group had been involved in the bombings, which he blamed on the police. He told a news conference that the police had arrested at least 70 group members in the previous 24 hours.

There has been considerable tension in recent days between the police and Murtaza's supporters, after the arrest of one of his key aides, Mohammed Ali Sunara.



Murtaza Bhutto: faction leader who opposed his sister

In exile, Murtaza led a militant resistance group which fought against Zia's dictatorship. He fell out with Benazir — who, like him, was educated at Harvard and Oxford — partly over his support for armed struggle. Murtaza returned to the country in 1993 as Benazir was starting her second term as prime minister after Zia's death in an air crash.

He was immediately arrested in connection with a hijacking carried out against Zia's government.

According to one Karachi newspaper, he had a one-point programme: "To make life miserable for his sister."

Murtaza took the side of his Iranian-born mother, Nusrat Bhutto, when Benazir ousted her from the PPP chairmanship, and he subsequently campaigned to have her reinstated and for former members of Zia's regime to be expelled from the government.

Murtaza set up his rival PPP branch in March last year, but attracted no heavyweights from his sister's mainstream party.

Murtaza's death has visibly shaken Benazir, who accompanied their mother, Nusrat, and another daughter, Sanam, in laying red roses on Murtaza's grave at the weekend near the family's ancestral home in Larkana, Sind.

Murtaza's Lebanese wife, Ghinwa, called on supporters to stay calm and await the outcome of a government inquiry after they clashed with police at the weekend near his house.

Witnesses said the demonstrators prevented President Farooq Leghari from paying a condolence visit by chasing the police away as his motorcade approached. They said about 250 people blocked the road with burning tyres and chanted slogans accusing Benazir's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, of being part of a conspiracy to kill their leader.

Nusrat Bhutto issued a statement saying Murtaza's death was part of a conspiracy against the family and denying reports that she had implicated Benazir and her husband.

Yeltsin 'too ill' for heart operation

David Hearst in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin's tenacious and bloody five-year grip on power loosened inexorably at the weekend as the leading heart specialist who is due to operate on him blurted out that the 65-year-old Russian leader may be too ill or too weak for surgery.

Even if Mr Yeltsin undergoes major heart surgery, it now seems increasingly unlikely that he will be able to return to take up the prize that he won in July this year — a full second term as president.

Renat Akchurin, one of Russia's foremost heart surgeons, said that Mr Yeltsin's heart may be too damaged to operate on without threatening his life.

The operation, possibly a triple bypass, involves stopping the functions of the heart. But one that has been weakened by three previous heart attacks may not begin to beat again.

Asked if the latest damage to Mr Yeltsin's heart meant the operation might be too risky, Professor Akchurin admitted: "It might be." He revealed that he had discovered "fresh scarring" on the heart, indicating that the president had suffered a recent attack.

Last week, he told America's ABC television network that Mr Yeltsin had suffered an attack "in late June or early July" just before the second round of the presidential elections. But at the weekend, under pressure from the Kremlin, he changed his statement, saying he was surmising from recent tests that the president had had an attack.

He said his purpose in revealing the heart attack was to draw attention to the dangers of the operation, possibly to postpone it. A council of doctors, including American cardiologist Michael Debakey, was to decide this week whether or not to proceed with the operation.

Whatever the truth, Prof Akchurin comments about Mr Yeltsin's real condition were politically explosive. In effect, he revealed that the Kremlin had lied to the electorate about Mr Yeltsin's health at a crucial stage in the election, when the Communist challenger Gennady Zyuganov could have won.

Even if Mr Yeltsin survives, Russia has now entered a period when it will be governed by the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin.

This will lead to a three-way power battle for the presidency, between Mr Chernomyrdin, the nationalist and quick-firing General Alexander Lebed, and the stolid but popular Mr Zyuganov.

The prime minister is unpopular and has little support in the army, whose officers have been impoverished by the reforms and have not been paid since July. His party, Our Home is Russia, crashed in last December's parliamentary elections. But he will have huge temporary power.

Under the constitution, if Mr Yeltsin is judged too ill to function all power passes to Mr Chernomyrdin, who has three months to call new presidential elections. Last week, Mr Yeltsin signed a decree preparing to hand all power, including control of nuclear weapons, to Mr Chernomyrdin, but only for the period of the operation.

Mr Zyuganov has said acidly that the president was unfit to govern. "Those who worked with Mr Yeltsin and said he was in perfect shape knew quite well what was really going on.

"Their lies and hypocrisy show that they knew perfectly well he was not able to work."

An opinion poll published in Sunday's edition of Izvestia found that 75 per cent of those asked believed that Mr Yeltsin was not in control of his post.

Pasok wins Greek elections

Helena Smith in Athens

THE Greek prime minister, Costas Simitis, led his Socialist party Pasok to election victory at the weekend, less than three months after he succeeded the late Andreas Papandreou as its leader.

Confounding expectations of a close race with the main opposition New Democracy Party, the Socialists won 162 seats in the 300-member parliament with 41.5 per cent of the vote.

"The people showed they want a new course for Greece and society," Mr Simitis, aged 60, said. "This great victory belongs to all citizens who envisage a better future."

Conceding defeat, Miltiades Evert announced that he would resign as leader of the conservative New Democracy, which won 38 per cent of the vote.

The election, the country's quietest ever, took place a year early. Mr Simitis called the vote to consolidate his powers as an elected leader. Ten months ago Pasok chose him as prime minister to replace the ailing Papandreou; when Papandreou died in June, the party made him its leader.

Analysts said the victory would give Mr Simitis a free hand to press ahead with reforms aimed at transforming Greece into a modern European Union state. Top of his agenda are likely to be policies to improve relations with neighbouring Turkey and to promote Greece's diplomatic and commercial role in the Balkans, where it is the only EU member.

Since succeeding Papandreou, who led the left to power in 1981, Mr Simitis has faced fierce criticism from Socialists who have not forgiven him for clashing openly with the late prime minister. With the country entering its 11th year of economic austerity, many have denounced his determination to reach EU targets for monetary and economic union by enacting unpopular fiscal measures.

The polls showed that, put off by Mr Simitis's deadpan manner and professorial air, many Pasok supporters hankered for the populist rhetoric of Papandreou.

Analysts attributed the strong showing of three smaller leftwing parties to the disaffection of some Pasok voters. For the first time, the Communist Party, the Left Alliance and Dikki, a populist Pasok splinter group, won seats in Athens' House.

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Nerve gas 'hit 24,000' in Gulf war

Ian Katz in New York

AN AMERICAN general last week blew apart the pretence that mysterious illnesses known collectively as the "Gulf war syndrome" may have affected only a small number of allied troops who served in the 1990-91 conflict.

General Barry McCaffrey, a senior commander during the war, said he feared as many as 24,000 of his troops may have been exposed to the deadly nerve gas sarin when United States soldiers blew up a massive ammunition depot in southern Iraq shortly after the conflict had ended.

The retired general — who now serves as President Bill Clinton's drug-enforcement supremo — said that on March 4, 1991, his entire division was within 15 miles of an Iraqi bunker used to store chemical weapons when, apparently unknown by him at the time, it was destroyed by US demolition experts.

More than 60,000 US and 1,700 British veterans of the Gulf war have persistently complained of mysterious health problems, which they suspect were caused by exposure to non-conventional weapons during the campaign to liberate Kuwait.

Gen McCaffrey expressed his fears as the Pentagon admitted for the first time that more than 5,000 US troops may have been exposed to sarin when the concrete bunker in the sprawling Kamisayah ammunition depot was blown up, sending a dense cloud of smoke drifting across the desert.

The US Defence Department had previously insisted that only about 300 or 400 troops directly involved in the Kamisayah demolition may have been exposed to chemical weapons after the March 4 explosion and the later destruction of a store of Katyusha rockets with chemical warheads on March 10.

The emergence of new details strikes directly at the Pentagon's position. Before it began conceding that some troops may have been affected, it had insisted for more than four years that US troops were not exposed in large numbers to chemical or biological weapons.

Gen McCaffrey told Newsday that an inspection of maps and records showed that his 24th Mechanised Infantry Division had been within 15 miles of so-called Bunker 73 when it was blown up. The Pentagon has admitted that troops within a 16-mile radius may have suffered "low-level exposure".

Indicating that no one had informed him of the bunker's destruction, the general said: "I am astounded that I hadn't heard of this report [of the sarin demolition] before. We were scared to death precisely this would happen."

He said his troops had worn rubber suits, gloves and boot coverings throughout the war to protect against gas attacks — but had not been wearing gas masks when the bunker was demolished.

Last week the Pentagon said that it was raising its estimate of the number of troops who may have been affected because its investigators had discovered that chemical agents may have been released on two separate occasions, and not just one.

"As we learn more about Kamisayah in the next few weeks we expect to identify more troops who might have been exposed," the Pentagon said in a statement.

The US military has said that it is notifying all veterans who may have been exposed, but is now certain to come under intense pressure to provide details on precisely which units were in the area.

The US Defence Department, after a massive study, concluded that there was "no clinical evidence" for the existence of a Gulf war syndrome.

Earlier this month, a White House inquiry into Gulf war syndrome criticised the Pentagon for conducting a "superficial" investigation and warned that officials had dramatically underestimated the number of troops who may have been exposed.

David Fairhall adds: A Ministry of Defence spokesman in London said last week: "No British forces were in the vicinity of Bunker 73. The nearest British troops were 94 miles southeast of Kamisayah, concentrated west of Kuwait City."

But the US reports nevertheless provided ammunition for British veterans meeting in Southport last weekend who have been seeking more information.

"We're not surprised to hear of this," Tony Flint, regional co-ordinator of the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association, said. "Obviously we must now investigate whether any British troops were in the same area."

The Week

HALF a century of nuclear tests was due to end on Tuesday as President Clinton led the world's five declared nuclear powers in signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty at the United Nations.

INDIA'S Congress Party turned to a faithful retainer, the septuagenarian Sitaram Kesri, to replace Narasimba Rao as leader after the former prime minister resigned as party chief in advance of a criminal trial.

THE Pope made a controversial four-day visit to France, which is 80 per cent Catholic but constitutionally secular. Up to 10,000 gathered in Paris to condemn the "return to moral order" with which the papal visit had, in some minds, been associated.

AFTER 15 years of legal wrangling, a Bordeaux court has decided that Maurice Papon, a former official of the wartime Vichy regime and a minister in the 1976 rightwing government, must stand trial on charges of crimes against humanity.

A BRITISH soldier has died after being beaten by a gang of youths while serving in Croatia. Simon Jeans, aged 25, suffered serious head injuries in the attack at Split and was flown to Britain for treatment.

THE former self-styled emperor of the Central African Republic, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, aged 75, is seriously ill and may need surgery to remove a brain tumour, according to doctors.

GUATEMALAN guerrilla leaders shook hands with army officers after signing an agreement in Mexico aimed at ending Central America's last and longest war.

TRAINING manuals used at the United States army's academy for Latin American military and police officers in the 1980s recommended the torture of guerrillas, threats, bribery and blackmail, according to documents made public by the Pentagon.

Washington Post, page 16

UP TO 200,000 Asian labourers are expected to leave the United Arab Emirates before the government's deadline for illegal workers to go.

SPIRO AGNEW, the only US vice-president forced out of office for criminal conduct, has died aged 77.

Washington Post, page 16

DOROTHY LAMOUR, the Hollywood star known for her portrayals in the 1930s and 1940s of exotic South Sea heroines wrapped in the silk sarong that became her trademark, has died at the age of 81.

24 killed in 'incursion' by N Korea

Andrew Browne in Seoul

NORTH KOREA said on Monday that a submarine found stranded off South Korea last week had drifted there after engine failure, and demanded the return of the vessel and crew, including the bodies of those killed.

It was Pyongyang's first direct comment on a drama that started on Wednesday last week when an estimated 26 North Koreans came ashore on an east coast beach near the city of Kangnung.

Seoul's forces have killed nine intruders, found the bodies of 11 believed killed by their own colleagues, captured one North Korean alive, and lost three of their men. One civilian was also killed accidentally by Southern forces as they continued hunting five North Koreans thought to be still on the loose.

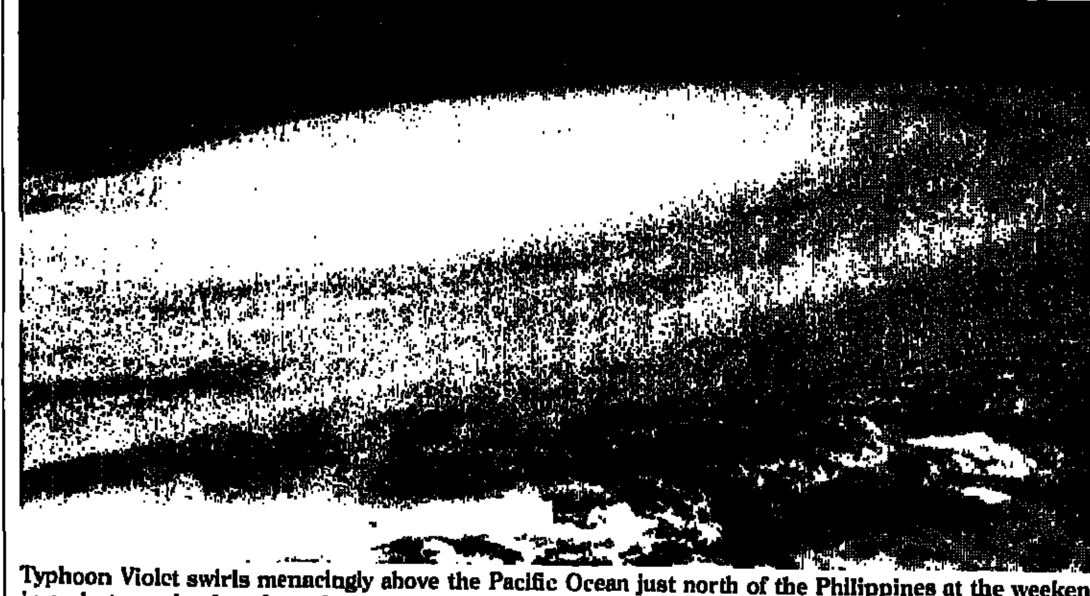
South Korea dismissed Pyongyang's explanation and maintained the intrusion was a military provocation. "The North Korean explanation about the vessel is nonsense," a defence ministry spokesman told a news conference.

A statement by Pyongyang's Ministry of the People's Armed Forces said the vessel was on a routine training mission when it developed engine trouble and ended up on rocks off Kangnung.

The statement said the submarine carried no heavy weapons and there were only small arms on board. However, the South Korean Joint Chief of Staff said a rocket launcher had been found on board.

In response to the incursion, Seoul will propose to the United States resuming joint war games scrapped last year as a gesture of peace to North Korea, a defence ministry statement said on Tuesday — *Reuter*

Le Monde, page 13
Washington Post, page 15



Typhoon Violet swirls menacingly above the Pacific Ocean just north of the Philippines at the weekend in a photograph taken from the space shuttle, Atlantis. With winds of up to 78 miles an hour, the storm churned past Tokyo and along the Pacific coast, killing at least three people

Censorship tightens on Iran's writers

Kathy Evans

IRANIAN intellectuals and writers say they are facing a concerted campaign by the security services aimed at further curbing press and literary freedoms.

In recent weeks, two editors have been ordered to court, five publications suspended and the Writers' Federation banned from meeting. Intellectuals link what they see as a campaign against them with the rise of the conservatives in parliament in the closing months of Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency.

The president is due to step down next spring, after two terms in office, unless constitutional changes clear the way for a third term. Until now, writers and liberals have viewed Mr Rafsanjani as their most powerful protector.

Censorship is said to have been tightened recently, and Iranian writers say the desire to preserve Islamic ideals against Western cultural influences has led the ministry of Islamic guidance to ban hundreds of books.

Story lines are rejected because they are too romantic, or portray women other than as wives, daughters or mothers. No novels or literary works are being licensed for publication at present, say publishing sources in Tehran.

In a recent interview with the BBC Persian Service, the Iranian Writers' Federation president, Houshang Golshiri, said censorship had become so severe that novels almost inevitably ended up in the bottom drawers of their authors. "In this country, you could not write a sentence like 'I left my house to buy some cigarettes and on the way I saw a beautiful woman'. That is the beginning of a story. Here, you could only write that you left your house to buy cigarettes," Mr Golshiri said.

Iranian television recently began broadcasting a weekly programme called Our Cultural Identity. It showed meetings of Iranian dissidents and monarchists abroad, cutting to profiles of prominent novelists, poets and newspaper proprietors at home, implying that the two groups were connected.

Earlier this month security officials raided a meeting of the Iranian Writers' Federation in a private home. Mr Golshiri was taken away for questioning and faces charges of spying for a foreign power. Farraj Sarkohi, the editor of Iran's leading literary magazine, Ardeneh, was also taken for questioning, and his magazine suspended, reports said.

The raid followed a similar incident in Tehran last month when security men entered the home of the German cultural attaché, who had invited a number of leading writers to a private dinner party.

Iranian writers say they are seeking only to have their books published and their organisation has no political ambitions. "The meetings we were having were aimed at drawing up a charter for the Writers' Federation to demand freedom of expression and publication. The authorities told us that we were forbidden to meet again," a federation official said.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 29 1996

China to 're-educate' Tibetan monks

John Gittings

TIBETAN monks are being threatened with expulsion from their monasteries if they fail to pass a political test in a tough drive by China to enforce discipline in its troubled border region. Teams of instructors have descended on three monasteries near Lhasa to conduct re-education classes.

In a message smuggled out of Sera monastery, the monks say that they expect many will be "driven out" or arrested. But they declare that they are "keeping their commitment" to the Tibetan cause.

Detailed regulations about the political-education classes say that monks must "be disciplined and listen very carefully . . . No one must leave early or make any noise." They are warned "not to cause any disruption in the classroom" and told that those who fail to study properly will be "struck off" the list of those allowed to stay in the monastery.

The campaign reflects increasing alarm in China over unrest in Tibet and the neighbouring border region of Xinjiang, as well as a more patriotic mood being promoted nationwide.

Beijing reacted sharply to news last week of a proposed meeting between the Dalai Lama — the exiled religious leader who is worshipped by virtually all Tibetans — and the Australian prime minister, John Howard. It was due to take place on Thursday despite a Chinese foreign ministry threat that the meeting would have an "unfavourable influence" on economic relations.

For the first time since China's Cultural Revolution, Tibetan monks and nuns are being forced to repudiate the Dalai Lama, whose pictures were banned from display last year.

The monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden near Lhasa have been chosen as test-beds for a political education campaign conducted by Communist Party "work squads" and reminiscent of the Mao era.

Regulations from Sera monastery, dated July 15, have been obtained by the London-based Tibet Information Network and bear the official red stamp of the Sera Monastery Democratic Management Committee. They say the purpose of the campaign is to "implant in the masses of the monks the views of the government" and to prevent "any activities aimed at splitting the motherland".

Many monks have fled into exile since the campaign was launched in the summer. Monks escaping over the border to India have said they were required to sign a document listing five principles: opposition to separatism; unity of Tibet and China; recognition of the young Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama (Tibet's second most senior religious leader); denial that Tibet had ever been independent; and denunciation of the Dalai Lama.

Chinese authorities have previously refrained from insisting that the Dalai Lama be repudiated, and the demand puts many loyal monks in an agonising situation.

The official Chinese press has confirmed that a "patriotic education campaign" is under way.

The chairman of the Tibet People's Congress, Raidi, warned recently in the Tibet Daily that "a lot of monasteries have become bases for splittist [separatist] activities", and that their "strongholds should be resolutely overthrown".

Similar warnings are being issued in Xinjiang, a vast region where a majority of the population are non-Han Chinese Muslims.

Rock art find upsets human origins theory

Christopher Zinn in Sydney and Tim Radford

AUSTRALIAN scientists last week upset theories of human origins with the discovery of rock art which they said was at least twice as old as that in the caves of Lascaux, France.

They have identified four sculpted boulders dating back 75,000 years in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia. They also claim to have found human artefacts in sediments known to have been laid down between 116,000 and 176,000 years ago.

If confirmed, the discoveries could send anthropologists back to the drawing board.

One of the scientists, Paul Tacon, of the Australian Museum, told the Sydney Morning Herald: "It changes enormously the way we think about Australian pre-history. To suggest that Aborigines have been in Australia for more than 100,000 years really does change a lot of things."

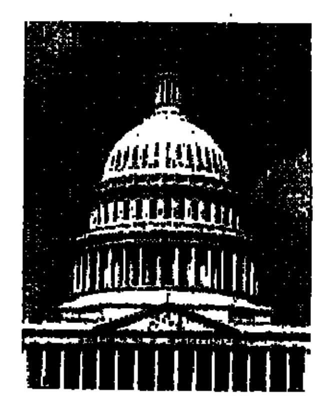
The site is 80km north east of the township of Kununurra at a place known to Aborigines as Jinmium. Photographs show isolated boulders covered with hundreds of small engravings of circles.

Dr Tacon said the designs must have been made by humans and despite their primitive form were art. On one rock there were 3,200 engravings. A stone tool was found in layers possibly dating it up to 176,000 years old. The scientists say it may be the oldest dated rock-art site on Earth.

Rock dating is always tricky. The scientists themselves say their results should be "the beginning, and not the end, of public scrutiny and discussion". But the find presents a problem for the orthodoxy which has it that humankind began in Africa. *Homo erectus* picked up a stone axe and set out to colonise the world 800,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens* — modern man — emerged about 250,000 years ago in Africa, and began migrating 150,000 years ago.

The Australian Aboriginals have been known to have settled in Australia about 50,000 to 60,000 years ago. Genetic evidence links them firmly with other modern humans. Their own "Dreamtime" version of pre-history holds that they have always lived in Australia and did not migrate there. But an occupation more than 100,000 years ago poses a problem for everybody.

Battle for the votes of introspective America



The US this week

Martin Walker

THE BIPARTISAN commission on television presidential debates decided against inviting Ross Perot, the Reform party candidate, to join Bob Dole and Bill Clinton in the three best opportunities to strut their stuff before the voters. They judged that on the basis of opinion polls, which show Perot at 5-8 per cent, he had no realistic chance of winning. They might also have looked at the list of issues that voters tell pollsters are of great concern, and note that Perot's two grand themes — the budget deficit and the need to protect American jobs against the low-wage competition of free trade — are not at the forefront of voters' minds.

It is a golden rule of American politics that the issue initiative rests with the challenger who attacks, rather than the incumbent who defends. This year, Dole began by saying the issue was character. Then it become a 15 per cent across-the-board income tax cut. Then it became teenage drug use, and last week he redefined his campaign to insist "this is about crime, this is about punishment".

Dole's flailings are in sharp contrast to Clinton's successful 1992 message of "The Economy, Stupid", and his simple promise of "Change". The economy, and its current buoyant health, is still Clinton's most potent issue. But his subsidiary themes of education, healthcare, welfare and health reform echo to an uncanny degree the main concerns of the "issues polling" carried out by his campaign, and echoed in independent polling surveys.

Significantly, the main themes pushed by Dole also hew closely to the concerns expressed in the polling data. He is hammering away at crime, drugs and immigration, rather than stressing the tax cut that was supposed to be the magic bullet of his campaign. Taxes, as an issue, come well down the list of polling concerns, with only 48 per cent of respondents to the Washington Post's poll saying this concerned them "a great deal".

In shifting the focus of his attack, Dole is also up against the instant-reaction team of the Clinton campaign, organised by George Stephanopoulos and Rahm Emmanuel, who apply the old Welsh rugby rule of getting one's retaliation in first. So Dole's attempt to hammer crime and punishment last week was briskly pre-empted by Clinton's flight to Ohio to claim the endorsement of the Fraternal Order of Police. This is the first time America's largest police association has ever endorsed a Democratic president, let alone announce that "Bill Clinton is the best friend a cop ever had in the White House".

All this makes for an unusual election. It is introspective, with foreign policy and the defence budget barely making a dent among voters, despite the simmering conflict with Iraq. It is only moderately concerned with the economy, and with taxes and the budget deficit, issues that dominated every presidential election in the past 20 years.

The issues of 1996 reflect an America that has turned in upon itself, to the concerns of the home, the family and the community, to the fears of ill health and drugs, the prospects for education, and the dangers of violent streets. The politics are more intimate and more personal, and less bothered by the old debate over big and intrusive government, and whether it does more harm than good.

There is also a striking geographical difference where particular themes do resonate. Californians usually put illegal immigration into their top three concerns, and their state government is currently battling with the courts over its right to deny health care and schooling to the children of illegal immigrants.

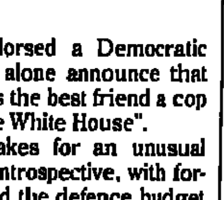
But California is just climbing out of a deep and localised recession, brought about by the decline in defence spending, which last year had the Golden State's unemployment rate two percentage points higher then the national average. By contrast today's booming Texas barely rates immigration as an issue, although the anti-immigrant movement was born there during the Lone Star state's recession of the 1980s.

Some of the issues that currently concern the voters are — for both the Dole and Clinton camps — double-edged swords. Clinton may rate low on trust and on moral values, but he and Hillary battled on to save a troubled marriage and raise a fine daughter. Dole walked out on his first wife, having had only two family dinners at home in that last year, one at Christmas, the other at Easter. Clinton is scarred by the Whitewater scandals. Dole and his wife Elizabeth dare not stress the number of his old Arkansas chums now in prison. Their own former campaign chairman and financial adviser, David Owen, has just completed a prison term for fraud.

So the candidates are stuck with the issues the pollsters report as most compelling for the voters. And this may yet prove the most misleading guide of all to the election. Voters often lie to pollsters, routinely saying they will vote for a black candidate about 10 per cent more than they actually do in the polling booth.

Voters also tend to mislead pollsters, in a public-spirited way, about the importance to them of a tax cut. Britain's Tories have long understood this, which was why they told George Bush's campaign in 1992 to stress trust and taxes.

Dole began fighting on just those two themes, until the pollsters reported they were not working with the voters, and he then broadened his campaign to include drugs, crime, immigration and the country's "moral crisis". By depending overly on the opinion polls, Dole may have abandoned the single, coherent message that could have done him most good.



Dole's difficulties, and the eclipse of Perot after the bipartisan commission decided that he should be excluded from the presidential debates, carries another implication. The politicians and the pollsters are increasingly focusing on the Democratic party's chances of resuming control of Congress, which it lost two years ago to Newt Gingrich's surging Republican revolution.

The retreat of that Republican tide could summon a Democratic Congress to revitalise the prospects for Clinton to return to his abortive agenda of domestic reforms, from healthcare to college grants and job training programmes. It could also, suggests the commentator John L Judis (a former leftist who brings a neo-Marxist rigour and class analysis to the often mushy assessments of US political trends), pave the way for a divisive battle for the Clinton inheritance in the tussle for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2000.

On the one side stands Clinton's centrist "New Democrat" project, based in the dominant new political geography of the middle-class suburbs, inspired by the centrist convictions of Al From and the Democratic Leadership Conference, and represented by vice-president Al Gore. The alternative is the traditional Democratic party of trade protection, labour unions, the urban base and the New Deal, represented by the Congressional leader Dick Gephardt.

In a strange irony, Clinton may lose by winning. The stronger the Democratic majority in Congress, the better the chances of Gephardt and the liberal base — still suspicious of Clinton's readiness to compromise with the Republicans on balancing the budget and welfare reform — to take the party back to its roots.

To give a flavour of the intensity this proto-debate is already provoking among Democrats, let me cite a letter I received from Bob Borosage, the Jesse Jackson adviser who now runs the Campaign for America's Future. He commented with amicable acidity on a recent column of mine concerning the Clinton-From drive to shift the party to the centre.

"QUOTING Al From on how to win elections is like quoting Dr Jack Kevorkian on life-saving techniques. From's candidates — almost universally — have lost. Clinton is the exception, but Clinton has always risen above From's foolishness," Borosage wrote. He argued that all the Big Government programmes that Clinton defended from the Republican zealots — Medicare, education and the environment — also won Clinton suburban support, even if From thought them too bureaucratic.

There is a great deal at stake in the 435 Congressional, and 33 Senate races this November. The majority party in each House of Congress automatically gets the crucial chairmanship and majority in all the committees. The majority also selects the Speaker of the House and the Senate majority leader, who have almost complete control of the legislative agenda.

The current betting, on the basis of the newly popular "generic poll" by Gallup, which asks respondents whether they will vote Democratic or Republican in the Congressional race, shows the Democrats ahead by 52-42. This margin has held steady since last month's convention in Chicago.

The Democrats need to win 19 seats in Congress and three in the Senate to recover their majority, and are clinging to Clinton's coat-tails to reach the target. Although many of the Democrats deliberately distanced themselves from Clinton two years ago, when he was at his political nadir, they are now clamouring for him to campaign in their districts.

The Republicans are significantly ahead in fund-raising. The National Republican campaign committee raised $63 million in the first half of this year, three times more than their Democratic equivalent. They also have what would normally be the advantage of incumbency, although many of their 73 freshmen who won their seats two years ago are sitting on perilously thin majorities.

"These are the people who closed down the US government, tried to slash Medicare and open up our precious environment to the exploiters," claims Martin Frost, chairman of the Democratic Congressional campaign committee.

On the last two occasions that the Republicans recaptured the House of Representatives, in 1946 and in 1952, they lost their control two years later — a pattern the Democrats are convinced they can repeat. But the long-term trends of the South and West becoming ever more solidly conservative are still helping the Republicans, as another wave of 20 veteran Democrats retire. In Texas alone, the Republicans have a strong chance of picking up six seats from retiring Democrats.

Given such losses, the Democrats will have to win at last 30 seats to be sure of a razor-thin majority in the House. In the Senate, where they are in danger of losing the Massachusetts seat of the low-key John Kerry to the popular liberal Republican Governor William Weld, the task may be even harder. The Democrats also have to fight very hard to retain the seats vacated by the retiring Senator Sam Nunn in Georgia, Bill Bradley in New Jersey, Howell Heflin in Alabama, and David Pryor in Clinton's native Arkansas.

The Republicans could have trouble, however, holding on to the seats of the venerable rightwing Senator Strom Thurmond, aged 96, of South Carolina, and Senator Jesse Helms, aged 75, of North Carolina. The Democrats also have a strong chance of winning Republican Senate seats in New Hampshire and Wyoming.

The Republicans are retreating fast from any association with Gingrich's now-discredited "Contract with America", which helped them win two years ago. But they should retain enough seats at least to slow any ambitious Democratic legislative agenda, while the Democrats launch their own internal battle for the Clinton succession in 2000.

Top six concerns

Are you very concerned by:	(per cent)
1. Education system getting worse	62
2. Crime increasing	61
3. Spread of Aids	61
4. College becoming too expensive	58
5. The welfare system	56
6. Illegal drug use growing	55

Bottom six concerns

Are you very concerned by:	(per cent)
1. Too much religion	11
2. Whitewater	12
3. Too much defence spending	13
4. Term limits for Congressmen	15
5. Ross Perot "messing up" election	16
6. Losing America's "melting pot" charm	16

Source: Washington Post

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Maxwell goes free and leaves no one to blame

NO ONE will now ever know who was responsible for stealing £425 million from the pension fund of the Maxwell media empire. The gaping hole in the fund was discovered when Robert Maxwell fell off his yacht in the Atlantic in 1991 and his publishing empire crashed. But fraud proceedings came to an end last week when one of his sons, Kevin Maxwell, walked out of the High Court a free man.

Kevin, his brother Ian, and their financial adviser, Larry Trachtenberg, were cleared of a number of fraud charges earlier this year after a costly trial which lasted 131 days. Other charges, of conspiracy to defraud bankers, remained outstanding against Kevin, Mr Trachtenberg, and another Maxwell executive, Albert Fuller. But Mr Justice Buckley ruled that a further trial "would be so unfair as to amount to an abuse of the power of the court". He ordered that the case be "stayed".

The Serious Fraud Office had split the indictment into separate cases in response to a judicial ruling that jurors should not have to sit through lengthy trials relating to a large number of offences. Now Mr Justice Buckley has made a conflicting ruling that it ought in future to be "unusual" for there to be a second trial in such cases.

The SFO, still smarting from criticism for its lack of success in the courts, believed it had a right to verdicts on the whole of its Maxwell indictment. Its director, George Staple, said the case had "serious implications" for the trials of white-collar crime. He has already suggested that juries should be taken out of lengthy fraud trials and replaced by panels of judges, or "expert" assessors, or a mix of the two.

The Maxwell allegations rank as Britain's largest domestic fraud case. The first trial cost at least £25 million and saw the longest retirement (11 days) of any jury. Nobody has been convicted of any criminal offence in relation to the affair, but the 32,000 defrauded pensioners have now all been compensated.

THE CHANCELLOR of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, was condemned by a union leader as a latter-day Sheriff of Nottingham who wanted to steal from poorly-paid public sector workers to "throw election bribes at the rich". Rodney Bickerstaff, general secretary of Unison, which represents government and health workers, was responding to the Chancellor's decision to freeze public sector pay for the fourth year in succession.

Mr Clarke cited the "benign" inflation rate (currently 2.1 per cent) as justification for his stance. But the freeze will affect 5 million workers, many of them the lowest paid. They have seen their average earnings fall behind the private sector by 16 per cent since 1982, while those of top directors have risen by 12 per cent and MPs salaries by 26 per cent.

THE ERA in which the taxpayer footed the bill for most of Britain's university entrants may be drawing to a close. Though none of the main political parties is keen to alarm middle-income voters with the prospect of hefty tuition bills for their children, the imposition of university fees now seems more likely than ever.

In a submission to Sir Ron Dearing's inquiry into the future of higher education, university vice-chancellors alarmed students with a proposal that graduates should repay more than £20,000 towards the cost of a degree. The money, plus interest, would be recovered through a charge of 3 per cent on their salaries.

But the vice-chancellors quickly dropped the idea after the Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, said she expected the Government to continue paying all tuition costs. However, the universities say the Government is not paying enough, which is why the Dearing inquiry was set up in the first place. The funding problem has been merely postponed.

THE LEADERS of Britain's two major political parties have squared up to fight for the "moral high ground". The Prime Minister initiated hostilities, defining this as a key battlefield in the approach to a general election.

In a London lecture, John Major put the case for tax cuts and a smaller state, arguing that governments should interfere less and allow people to take more responsibility for the money they spent. It was not moral, he said, to impose a national minimum wage.

Labour's leader, Tony Blair, countered, saying that morality was not about taxation but about education, the homeless, the unemployed and safer streets. It was not a question of how much should be spent, but on where it should go.

Comment, page 10

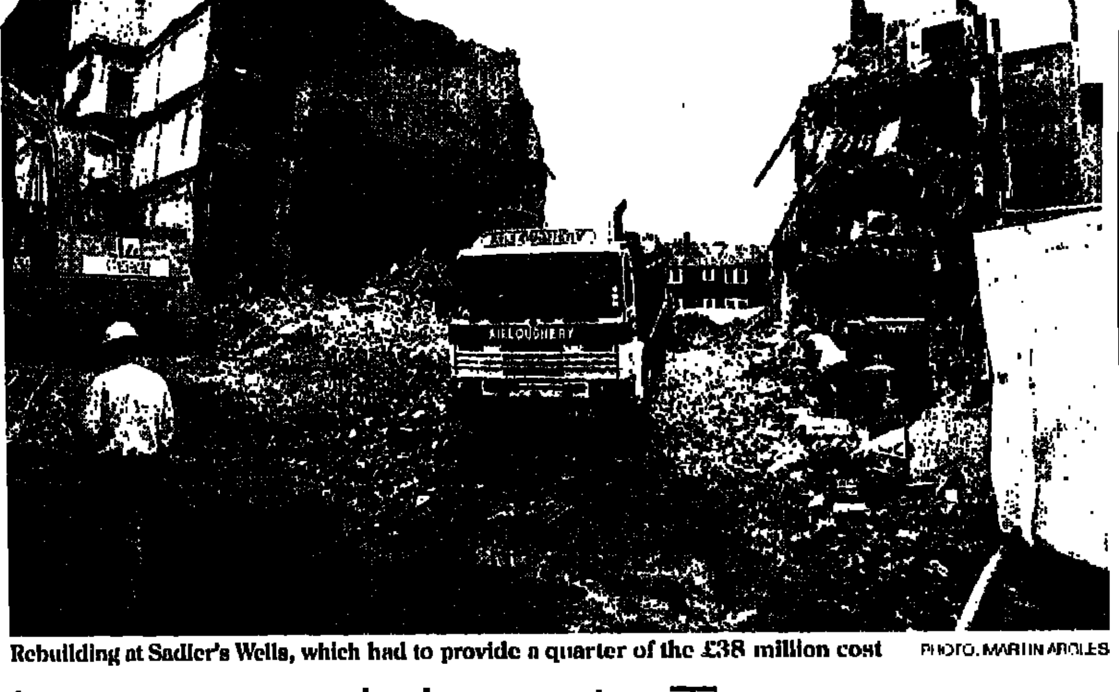
A STRONGLY WORDED attack on "unnatural practices" in agriculture was launched by the Prince of Wales, who uses organic farming methods on his estate at Highgrove. He claimed that mad cow disease might be the result of catastrophic experiments in disturbing the balance of nature and treating animals like machines.

In an indictment of British farming policy, he said: "Perhaps BSE will come to be seen as one example, albeit a very expensive and damaging one, of how nature hits back when we violate her laws."

Austin

IT WAS NOBODY, WITH NOTHING, IN THE BOARDROOM.

MAXWELL CLUEDO



Rebuilding at Sadler's Wells, which had to provide a quarter of the £38 million cost PHOTO: MARTIN ARGLES

Lottery cash boosts Treasury

Maev Kennedy

LESS than 15 per cent of almost £2.5 billion available to the five lottery good causes has actually been paid out, according to government figures.

Figures disclosed by the Heritage Minister Iain Sproat to the former Tory prime minister Sir Edward Heath reveal that although more than £2 billion has been allocated in grants, in the fields of arts, sports, heritage, millennium and charities, just over £317 million has been paid out. That figure has risen, in the round of grants over the last few weeks, to £374 million.

The undistributed money helps make the Government's finances look rosier. Although the money remains part of the good causes funds, and earning interest for them, for accountancy purposes the £2 billion is counted as part of the Government's wealth until it is paid out, and helps reduce the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

A Department of National Heritage spokeswoman confirmed the figures last week, but said: "We expect the sum to reduce rapidly once a wide range of projects comes on stream."

Mr Sproat insists that "the impression that little money has actually been paid out" is false.

The lowest percentage paid out of the amounts awarded is the millennium grants, at 3 per cent, while the applicants to the heritage fund have done best, at 29 per cent. The arts fund has paid out 17 per cent, the sports fund 21, and charities 23.

Mr Sproat said 71 per cent of successful applicants had received at least part of their money, rising to 90 per cent in the charities sector.

A spokeswoman for the Millennium Commission said that many of their projects were fairly large, and were subject to delays in detailed designs and planning permission.

A Heritage fund spokeswoman said they had paid out more than the other bodies because urgent appeals had led to some being processed and agreed within two days.

● An anonymous donor has given the Wallace Collection in London £2.5 million towards a £10 million project to improve facilities and make its sumptuous galleries better known. The gift will be lost if a lottery grant bid for £7.5 million fails.

Britain to help 'tug of love' parents in Europe

Clare Dyer and Sarah Boseley

THE Government is to press for a better deal for British parents of "tug of love" children, who face daunting hurdles in getting back children abducted abroad by an estranged spouse.

Britain, which has one of the best records for returning kidnapped children, is to lobby for fast-track procedures and better enforcement in other countries which have signed the European Convention on Child Custody and the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction.

Growing numbers of parents caught up in custody battles have resorted to snatching their children and fleeing abroad. There were 156 applications for the return of children taken from England or Wales to other convention countries in 1995, compared with 130 in 1994.

Although the Hague Convention has been ratified by 43 countries, some are less helpful than others. In Britain, parents from abroad are given legal aid for a lawyer without a means test, but some countries offer no reciprocal aid for British parents, or require a means test.

Problems have arisen with Germany, where attempts to settle cases informally before resorting to court have led to delays. In Britain, cases go straight to the High Court.

The predicament of a British woman, Catherine Laylle, may now become a test case at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Ms Laylle's estranged husband, Peter Volkmann, abducted Alexander, aged 11, and Constantin, aged nine, to Germany in 1994. The High Court ordered their return under the convention, which generally lays down that children should be brought up in the country where they have spent most of their life.

It was initially backed by a German court, but Mr Volkmann, a doctor in Bremen, refused to comply. He took his case to an appeal court in his home town of Celle, in northern Germany, which awarded him custody in the mother's absence.

The court also decided that Ms Laylle could visit her sons three hours a month, in the presence of a lawyer. She must speak only German to them.

Ms Laylle was a high-flying City banker when she began the case, and failed to get legal aid in Germany where claims are means-tested.

Dr Volkmann qualified for legal aid in Britain to fight her in the High Court.

Since then, Ms Laylle has lost her job because of the amount of time she has spent on the case, and has run up £100,000 of debts.

Anger over police payouts

Martin Wainwright

LONG-STANDING concern about the early retirement bill for the North Yorkshire police force escalated sharply with the new disclosure that £150,000 has been paid to a senior officer suffering from stress, the day after it was revealed that the force paid out £100,000 to a woman victim of sexual harassment

Councillors are now pressing for disclosure of a series of big compensation payments by the cash-strapped police authority.

The bills have added to a lop-sided financial burden on the force, which has made highly publicised economy cuts in the past two years, including the temporary mothballing of 25 patrol cars. North Yorkshire spends £11 million on pensions out of its £70 million annual budget and has suffered an unusually high number of officers leaving through ill health.

A spokesman for North Yorkshire police denied that the harassment payments had been made to prevent embarrassing revelations at an industrial tribunal about officers wearing bulldog clips on their nipples and being locked in a dog kennel for wearing the "wrong" tie.

Church 'betrayed by Judas bishop'

Madeleine Bunting

THE disgraced Catholic Bishop of Argyll, Roderick Wright, was compared to Judas on Sunday by one of his former priests, who accused him of betraying the trust of the Catholic Church.

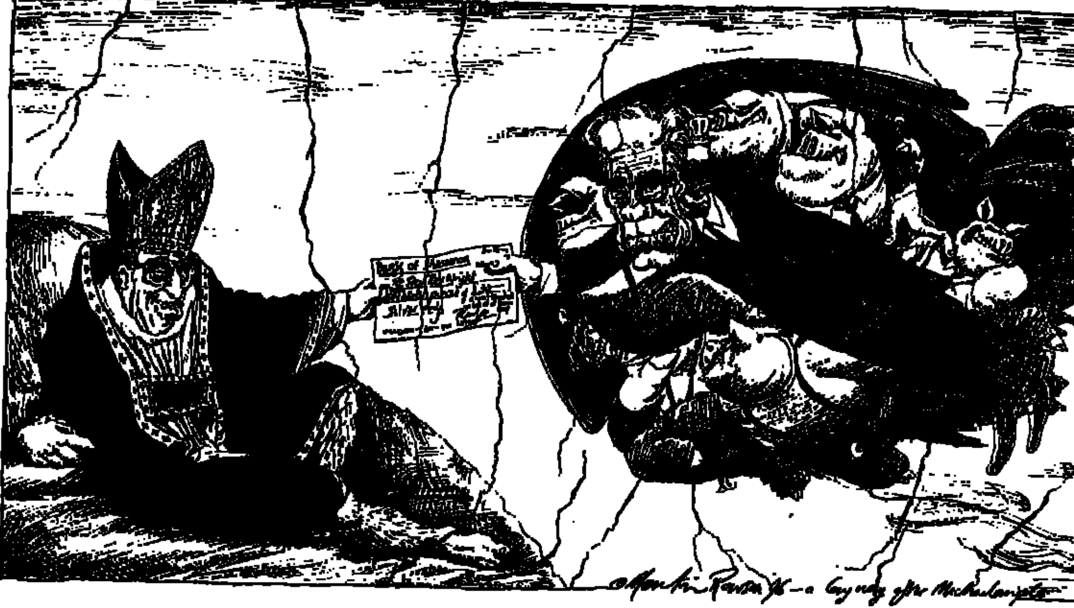
A week of scandal, during which one of Mr Wright's former lovers, Joanna Whibley, revealed that he had fathered her 15-year-old son Kevin, reached a climax on Sunday when the former cleric sold his story to a tabloid newspaper.

Mr Wright revealed in the News of the World that he is planning to marry the divorcee parishioner, Kathleen MacPhee, with whom he ran away earlier this month, an action contrary to Church teaching which would in effect bar him from the Catholic Church. The sacraments are denied to those married to divorcees.

The former bishop and Mrs MacPhee described from a rented cottage in Kendal, Cumbria, their anguish at falling in love and their attempts to keep apart. They claimed they had no physical relationship. There was little reference to Ms Whibley or her son.

The revelations were the final twist of the knife for British Catholics: their initial compassion for Mr Wright had given way to bitter disillusionment and fury at his duplicity and irresponsibility over his previous relationship with Ms Whibley.

At St Columba's cathedral, Oban, the church abandoned by its bishop, Fr Sean MacAulay told worshippers: "Like Christ was betrayed by someone in his group for 30 pieces of silver, perhaps we feel similarly betrayed."



The two most senior figures in the church hierarchy in Scotland, Cardinal Thomas Winning and Archbishop Keith O'Brien, were said to be in a state of "sadness, total disbelief and some depression" at Mr Wright's latest decision.

Ann Widdecombe, the Home Office minister and Catholic convert, said excommunication should be considered. The Church immediately ruled out such a possibility.

Meanwhile the Catholic Church is grappling with the problem of how to respond to women involved with priests and their children, after the crisis prompted revelations of a string of such relationships.

Senior members of the Catholic hierarchy have suggested that a committee should be set up to find out the extent of the problem, but last week the Vatican said the Church could not be expected to police its priesthood. Others have suggested dioceses should appoint independent counsellors — similar to those who handle cases of child sexual abuse — who would be the first port of call for priests or women seeking help.

Cardinal Basil Hume, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, suggested last week that the insistence on celibacy for Roman Catholic priests could be changed. He conceded that many "excellent" people were being lost to the Church because of the rule that Catholic priests must remain celibate.

● Guidelines to help Church of England ministers avoid intimacy with adults or children which could lead to sexual scandal were published by the Oxford diocese on Monday.

Clergy are advised not to visit parishioners of the opposite sex or invite them to their home late at night, and they are warned against the perils of drink and drugs on duty.

Women and priests, page 24

Call for reform of stalking law

Christopher Elliott

VICTIMS support groups demanded a change in the law last week after a jury was ordered to clear a 37-year-old van driver who offered no defence to a charge of stalking a woman for four years.

Dennis Chambers, who represented himself and questioned his alleged victim, Margaret Bent, during his trial, was cleared of two counts of causing grievous bodily harm and one of affray.

Judge Quentin Campbell told Inner London crown court it was "extremely difficult" to prove intent in cases of psychiatric or psychological harm.

The Government announced in July that there would be new civil and criminal laws to tackle obsessives. Last month Julia Mason was cross-examined for six days by Ralston Edwards before he was convicted of raping her,

The National Association of Victims Support Schemes said the new laws should go further and give alleged victims of domestic or sexual violence the right not to be examined by the accused. A spokeswoman said: "In any case of rape, domestic violence or sexual assault, serious consideration should be given to whether defendants should be allowed to cross-examine them."




Margaret Bent: cross-examined by accused PHOTO: JOHN STILLWELL

Labour proposes reform to 'lottery of unequal provision'

Michael White

CHILD poverty groups last week joined fierce Conservative and Liberal Democrat condemnation of Labour's £1 billion plans to replace child benefit for older teenagers with a means-tested education allowance, targeted at low and middle income families whose children currently drop out of school.

But after bridge-building overtures to trade unions and Labour backbenchers, the shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, was able to unveil his package to reform the "unfair lottery of unequal provision" without a hail of abuse from leftwing MPs and activists.

That may come at next month's party conference or when Mr Brown, the shadow education secretary, David Blunkett, and Harriet Harman announce crucial details of the scheme dubbed "a new teenage tax" by Tories.

Mr Brown will unveil the rate at which the allowance will be paid — higher than child benefit and possibly between the £12 and £15 range — after the November budget. Only then will he also reveal the income level at which better-off parents of youngsters aged from 16-18 will cease to be eligible. It remains a potential minefield.

In an ambitious blueprint for raising skills via work-based or the school/college route, Labour plans to use the £600 million spent on post-16 child benefit, plus £400 million spent in Youth Training (YT) allowances to re-focus resources towards the less well-off. Mr Brown has cautiously insisted it must not increase public spending.

The money, still paid to mothers, will only go to those whose children are in "meaningful education or training". The move represents a significant shift of resources from welfare to education, Ms Harman said — part of Labour's drive to cut welfare costs by getting people back to work.

Mr Brown and his allies reached agreement after backstairs battles which saw Chris Smith replaced by Ms Harman at the social security portfolio in July.

The trio stressed the need to shake up the post-16 education system on grounds of fairness and economic efficiency. "The status quo is not working and must be changed," said Mr Brown. British teenagers stay in education and training at half the rate of major competitor countries, 40 per cent at 18 compared with 80 per cent in France and Germany.

Given the rule whereby universal child benefit — up to £10.80 a week — for children up to 16 is available only to those between 16 and 18 who stay at school, Mr Brown argued that up to £1,500 is going to well-off families while those in most need of skills for work have a positive disincentive to get them.

Sally Witcher, director of the Child Poverty Action Group, expressed disappointment over the adoption of a means-tested route when extra resources were what the situation really needed.

Debate, page 11

Shephard sets national teacher training rules

Donald MacLeod

A CRACKDOWN on "trendy" teaching methods was signalled by Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, as she imposed a national curriculum for trainee teachers last week.

In the latest move to increase control over colleges and university education departments — blamed by many Tories for promoting ineffective, child-centred methods in the classroom — she said trainees would have to demonstrate subject knowledge and a grasp of approved teaching methods before they were allowed to work in schools.

Funding will be withdrawn from courses which fail to deliver the goals Mrs Shephard set out. In England and Wales a national curriculum for primary teaching in English and mathematics will be introduced next September, with secondary teaching to follow in 1998.

The curriculum will be policed by a second round of inspections by the Office for Standards in Education, which is expected to be more critical of departments than the "sweep" just completed. To date inspectors have found 95 per cent of primary courses satisfactory or better.

The Government had overhauled the structure of teacher training and insisted on far more school-based experience for trainees, Mrs Shephard said. "But despite this, it has become increasingly obvious to everyone that too many newly qualified teachers, through no fault of their own, lack the teaching skills they need." The new curriculum would give inspectors a clearer focus and the Teacher Training Agency would be on surer ground in withdrawing funding when necessary.

League tables of training institutions, based on inspection reports, entry standards and trainees' success in getting jobs, would be published next year.

But while the move is a sop to rightwingers, Mrs Shephard's package also seeks to promote teachers' professionalism with a series of new advanced qualifications — the outcome of lobbying by Anthea Millett, chief executive of the agency.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, said Mrs Shephard was playing politics with teacher training. "Twenty years ago the criticisms would have been valid. Today they will simply be a further blow to teacher morale," he said.

● Undergraduates are increasingly likely to be taught by untrained postgraduate students earning as little as £3.75 an hour from cash-starved academic departments.

Evidence from the Association of University Teachers shows college administrators are coping with the Government's decision to squeeze their budgets by enlisting PhD students, who can no longer rely on grants to fund their research.

More than 70 per cent of postgraduates giving tutorials, laboratory classes and lectures said their suitability as teachers had never been formally assessed.

Research v teaching, page 19

PM's scheme 'a nightmare'

THE future of John Major's nursery voucher scheme was thrown into doubt after Tory-controlled Westminster council warned that the pilot it is running is fraught with problems and a bureaucratic nightmare for teachers, *Rebecca Smithers writes.*

In a leaked submission to the all-party education committee, the council has questioned Mr Major's promise that the scheme will widen choice and improve the quality of education. It claims that "market forces on their own will not address shortage of places" and that "the likelihood of a voucher scheme stimulating the market to create new places is doubtful".

It also warns that the £1,100 vouchers do not even cover the cost of a part-time nursery place and that the number of places could fall. "These difficulties need to be addressed by the Government," it says.

EU beef ban to stay after cull halted

Stephen Bates in Brussels and Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE European Commission responded to the Government's decision to halt the cull of 147,000 cows by warning that the ban on the export of British beef could stay in place until BSE had been eradicated in Britain.

European leaders made it clear they believed the Government had reneged on last June's Florence agreement when the Cabinet decided last week not to proceed with the cull of cattle under 30 months believed to be at risk of mad cow disease.

The Government says a statistical study by Oxford university, which claims the disease will die out within five years, renders the selective cull unnecessary. The European Union argues the cull was part of the agreement to secure a phased lifting of the ban, and that it will ensure both that eradication occurs more quickly and that consumer confidence on the Continent is restored.

John Major called for a rational debate in Europe. He insisted that in halting the cull Britain remained within the rules agreed by EU farm ministers. "We are operating within the Florence agreement. It was perfectly clear within the agreement that if new evidence arose we had to consider that evidence."

Franz Fischler, Europe's agriculture commissioner, told the European Parliament in Strasbourg: "As long as they do not meet the preconditions and until we can have a working document from them which we can carefully check, then an end to the export ban is simply not a possibility."

In Brussels, Klaus Van der Pas, the Commission's senior spokesman, said: "If the UK government comes to the conclusion that the conditions [for lifting the ban] cannot be fulfilled, then the beef ban cannot be lifted."

The Commission insisted that it was abiding by the Florence agreement — hailed by Mr Major at the time as a triumph — but that any new evidence would be considered. Any lifting of the ban will have to be agreed by the veterinary committee, by the Commission and finally the Council of Ministers.

But the Commission opened the possibility of a partial lifting, with or without a cull, in Northern Ireland if its cattle are given a clean bill of health — a move the Government has opposed because of its implications for the unity of the United Kingdom.

In Britain, Douglas Hogg, the agriculture minister, admitted that the Cabinet's decision meant there was no chance of the ban being lifted this autumn.

Headmaster 'killed by young gang'

Vivek Chaudhary

HEADMASTER Philip Lawrence was stabbed to death while trying to defend one of his pupils from an attack by a street gang which pretended to be the juvenile equivalent of the Triads, the Old Bailey was told on Monday.

John Bevan, prosecuting, said on the first day of the trial of a 16-year-old youth accused of murdering Mr Lawrence that the gang arrived at St George's Roman Catholic School in Maida Vale, west London, last December, armed, wearing dark clothes, and with bandannas over their faces. It was, he said, a planned "military operation".

The 16-year-old, who cannot be named following a court order, was a member of the Wo Sing Wo (WSW) gang, largely made up of youths of Filipino origin, said Mr Bevan.

The youth denies murder. He is also jointly charged with a 15-year-old, who also cannot be named, of conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm to the pupil Mr Lawrence allegedly tried to help, and wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. Both deny the joint charges.

Mr Bevan said that up to 12 members of the WSW gang, led by the 16-year-old defendant, arrived at St George's intending to attack a pupil at the school. When Mr Lawrence "peaceably" confronted their leader, he was stabbed in the chest "with a mixture of bravado and adrenalin".

The court heard that Mr Lawrence, aged 48, the first teacher to be killed while carrying out his duties, was "first a family man with a wife and four children and second a headmaster".

One of Mr Lawrence's main preoccupations was the safety of his pupils and "it was in seeking to protect one of them that he died".

Mr Bevan said: "Gone are the days when fisticuffs in a playground in a fair fight were thought reasonable . . . He [the defendant] thought that an armed gang was the answer."

The case continues.

● Crime figures for the 12 months to July are expected to show the first rise in England and Wales for several years.

The Home Office figures reveal a 2 per cent rise in the number of offences, with a total for the year of more than 5 million. Broadly, they show that the number of property crimes has continued to fall but that violent crimes rose by 10 per cent.

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, and his wife, Jane, in Brighton PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Ashdown rules out being eternal bridesmaid

Michael White

ON the eve of his party's conference in Brighton, Paddy Ashdown warned Tony Blair not to take the Liberal Democrats for granted and treat them as a mascot if Labour forms the next government.

His remarks coincided with a prediction from the party's home affairs spokesman, Alex Carlile, that Labour and the Liberal Democrats should effect a formal union.

The MP for Montgomery said he saw two parties in the future — "one Conservative party and the other a democratic party". He urged Mr Ashdown to consider a formal role for Liberal Democrats in a Labour government.

Mr Carlile's intervention, has highlighted the Liberal Democrat leader's dilemma. He is torn between key allies who expect close co-operation — and possibly ministerial jobs — if Mr Blair wins power, and grassroots activists and MPs who fear a realignment which may swallow them up.

Evidently keen to acknowledge grassroots fears, he adds: "People in the Labour party have got to get out of thinking that the Liberal Democrats are some small shed in the garden at Walworth Road [Labour's headquarters]. We are sovereign parties that offer different choices to the electorate."

He rules out being the eternal bridesmaid, alternating in coalition with the bigger parties like the German Free Democratic Party (FDP).

"I want my party to become the largest party in this country. I do not want the cosy position of being the FDP, everybody's mascot," he asserts, at a time when Lib Dems are stuck at around 14-16 per cent in the polls.

Mr Ashdown's tactical move away from Labour is diametrically opposed to the friendly overture Mr Blair made to the Lib Dems before their conference a year ago. Although Mr Ashdown's allies repeatedly acknowledge common ground with Labour over Europe, education and health, the leadership has expressed "deep disappointment" over Labour's U-turn in Scotland.

Post union faces Royal Mail's 'loaded gun'

THE Post Office union could face massive claims for damages as it emerged that the latest strikes were called off after Royal Mail threatened legal action over a balloting technicality, *writes Seumas Milne.*

Communication Workers' Union leaders were forced to abandon two 24-hour strikes and agree to a new ballot last week, after Post Office executives gave an ultimatum to union leader, Alan Johnson. Unless a new ballot of delivery and sorting workers was held, he was warned, Royal Mail would seek a court injunction banning further strikes and open the union to claims for damages. The bill could run to more than £1 million.

Royal Mail discovered that the CWU failed to give formal notification of 431 spoilt ballot papers after the strike vote was announced last June.

The prospect of a legal attack on the CWU risks turning the postal dispute into the biggest confrontation over anti-union legislation for a decade. Under the 1993 Trade Union Reform Act unions lose their immunity from being sued for damages if they breach regulations, including the requirement to provide details of spoiled voting papers.

If any company sought to sue for lost business as a result of the strikes, the dispute over postal working practices, pay and hours would be inflamed and the issue could blow up during the Labour party conference at the end of this month.

In Brief

THE Church in Wales voted by the narrowest of margins to gain the required two-thirds majority to lift the ban on women becoming priests, ending the last bar on women in the priesthood within the Anglican church in Britain.

THE Department of Health has won a permanent High Court ban stopping the sale of a "reality" video of operations on health service patients.

SIR MAURICE DRAKE has stepped down as judge from the trial of a man accused of grievous bodily harm after defence lawyers argued that his role as a leading freemason might lead to "possible bias".

SURVIVORS of the Holocaust and their relatives will have to wait at least two years before they know whether they can recover billions of pounds worth of looted Nazi gold which the Foreign Office believes remains in the vaults of Swiss banks.

A CHARM offensive by British Nuclear Fuels has sent it soaring into the top 10 of corporate donors to charity. British Telecom remains the leading donor with £15.2 million for community contributions.

A STUDENT who downloaded child pornography on the Internet was jailed after the CIA tipped off British police.

FORENSIC scientists have identified 14 IRA terrorists who may have grounds for appeal against their convictions because of contaminated equipment in a government laboratory.

BRITISH businessman Krishna Maharaj, condemned to die in Florida's electric chair for the 1986 murder of two associates, has won a new hearing.

ALMOST a third of the 541 prisoners granted early release last month during the fiasco over the introduction of new sentencing guidelines have already reoffended, according to the National Association of Probation Officers.

POLICE have launched a murder investigation following the death of a woman aged 73 after she was raped while taking a walk through her village in Lincolnshire.

A BRITISH hostage, Philip Halden, has been freed after being held for seven months by guerrillas in the Colombian jungle, who treated him "no better or worse than . . . a cow or pig".

WITH a touch of awkwardness, Westminster Abbey has unveiled a memorial window to the poet A E Housman, a staunch God-hater.

Why Saddam is laughing

IT'S NOW official that Saddam Hussein has been strengthened, not weakened, by the latest events in northern Iraq and US aerial retaliation. The source is impeccable: CIA director John Deutch in his testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Mr Deutch agreed that the US cruise-missile attacks and the expansion of the no-fly zone had hit Saddam "strategically". But his real message was that the Iraqi leader had emerged from the latest confrontation "politically stronger". No one is suggesting Saddam has the capacity to mount a strategic campaign against any of his neighbours. He does not even have the hardware to bring down a US plane, only to launch a missile vaguely in its direction — and wait for the contentious retaliation. Losing a few anti-missile sites is cheap at the price, for where Saddam excels is in his tactical ability to exploit the confusions of others.

Externally, lack of allied support for the unilateral US action has created a perception of weakness in an area where perceptions are all-important. It has sharpened suspicion among the Gulf states that a double game is being played — with Iran and Turkey plus Israel in the shadows — that could destabilise their region. Internally, Mr Deutch's conclusion contradicts his own agency's more optimistic assertion of only a few months ago. Then it wrote down Saddam's prospects of survival. Now Mr Deutch says baldly that "we do think he's going to survive", because he controls "one of the most ruthless and efficient regimes that I know about". No doubt the CIA's knowledge has been enriched by the ease with which Saddam rolled up a dissident plot against him, backed by the agency and involving elements in the Iraqi army, earlier this summer.

There are no quick-fix solutions here. The ambivalence of the neighbouring states only mirrors a view widely held in Washington in the past, which in modified form still underpins its doctrine of dual containment (of both Iraq and Iran). What Saudi Arabia and the others fear is not so much a Shiite successor in Iraq allied to Iran. It is a more diffuse outcome where instability in Iraq generates more of the same at home. By "instability" these countries really mean the voicing of internal protest, which has taken an increasingly fundamentalist turn. As long as those who define US and Western national interest refuse to include the need for political rights and civil justice, and condone repressive and feudal regimes, the democratic alternative will be blocked off. Post-Gulf war expressions of interest in Arab democracy expressed only the most fleeting of lip-service.

Saddam's internal strength is harder to gauge. But the real problem in Iraq is much more the suffering of its people than the survival of its leader. The West can do something about one but not the other. The oil-for-food agreement, now held up under US pressure, will deliver some aid to those who need it most. Though Saddam will seek to divert it, it is subject to rigorous scrutiny which should resist most if not all of his manipulation. Aid to the Kurds should also be resumed: they are not to blame for the intrigues of their factional leaders. Helping people to survive may not make headlines, but it is a good deal more effective than misdirected missiles.

Energy crisis in the Third World

WE LIVE IN a solar-powered world, yet nearly two-and-a-half billion people — most of them living in very hot climates — are desperately short of energy with which to improve their existence. There are two energy crises: the one we know about, in which 21 per cent of the world's population guzzles 70 per cent of the world's commercial energy output, mostly in the form of pollution-causing fossil fuels. The other energy crisis is barely perceived, and the proceedings of the UN World Solar Summit, which grappled with it over two days last week, have barely been reported. It is the crisis in which 40 per cent of the world's population still lives at a basic subsistence level without any form of electricity. This is just as big a challenge as tackling the new world food shortage or the greenhouse effect — and is linked to both of them too.

Meeting the energy deficit for the poor 40 per cent of the world by conventional means is vastly expensive and will only add to pollution. Nuclear power is prohibitive for a poor country and we are now well aware of its hidden costs. To provide fossil fuels to this huge clientele would run down resources and increase environmental damage: poor countries cannot afford the pollution-reducing frills of the developed world. The use of wood and charcoal has already devastated forests, but can only be slowed down if there is an affordable substitute. The most obvious resource is the enormously powerful one above our heads, and the related renewable sources of wind and tide. Yet investment in renewable energy research is marginal.

The list of heads of state and government attending the World Solar Summit in Harare was a roll-call of deprivation: Angola, Cape Verde, Fiji, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Pakistan, Senegal, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and the Palestinian Authority. Only Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia came from the other, high-achieving, world. The US, Britain, Germany and other Western nations were only represented by diplomats based in Africa, although China and India sent ministers. The conference suffered from being organised by Unesco against which the US has been waging a vendetta. But except for the high-profile Rio Conference, most international environmental campaigns fail to be noticed, and then fail.

The Harare Summit has identified 300 projects already under way in 60 countries which need support. They include solar power schools in rural Georgia, a solar water desalination project for the Gaza Strip, rural electrification in Zimbabwe and energy self-sufficient villages in Pakistan. These will need to be repeated on a huge scale to make a difference. Funding for renewable energy technologies takes up only 3 per cent of lending by the World Bank and other multilateral banks. Yet the value of the emerging worldwide market for these technologies, if it were encouraged to develop, could reach $40 billion a year. Small is beautiful, but it can be complex and expensive. Unesco's new vision needs new cash as well.

Politicians on the high road

IT IS ENCOURAGING to discover that John Major wants to fight the next election on the high moral ground. It would be even more encouraging were there any general agreement about where this ground is to be found. The high moral ground as defined by politicians, unhappily, tends to mean little more than the ground they find it convenient to occupy. On John Major's definition, the heart of the high moral ground is individuals' freedom to do as they choose. So cutting the share of national wealth that goes to the state is a moral action. Cutting the size of government to give people more scope to make their own choices, bringing down taxes, extending deregulation — all these cherished Conservative tenets belong, by happy coincidence, on the high moral ground too. Others would draw their maps differently. For them, the high moral ground entails a commitment to treating all sections of our society equitably and decently, even if that sometimes implies that the prosperous may have to contribute more.

Short of a kind of Ordnance Survey of Ethics, no consensus will ever exist on the whereabouts of this territory. So if politicians are genuinely eager to set up camp on it, they might usefully start with more modest and practical tests. They might, for example, commit themselves not knowingly to tell lies about their opponents. Tony Blair is not a devil with staring red eyes. Michael Howard, even at Tory conferences, is not the reincarnation of Judge Jeffreys. Paddy Ashdown is not some kind of juvenile anarchist with secret designs on the monarchy or the liberalisation of banned drugs. There are even things to be said for Dr Brian Mawhinney. Let them also pledge to cost their opponents' promises on the basis of arithmetic that commands at least a measure of credibility with non-partisan observers. Let them promise not to pretend through the coming election campaign that issues like Europe and Northern Ireland are best left undiscussed — a pretence they maintained throughout the 1992 campaign. Let them turn aside from character assassination, and condemn it when it occurs in newspapers that support them. Should they make and maintain such resolutions, and others like them, we may begin to believe that their dedication to the high moral ground is real, and not just contrived for PR purposes.

Bitter reality exposes Bosnia's poll charade

Jonathan Eyal

WESTERN observers and international agencies have been quick to pronounce this month's Bosnian vote as both fair and useful; irregularities were detected here and there but, given the republic's recent bloody history, this was only to be expected. Yet the official expressions of optimism hide a bitter reality. Far from recreating the old republic, the vote has sealed Bosnia's carve-up. The vote has no chance of reversing years of ethnic cleansing; it may, however, cleanse the West's guilty conscience. But this, to a large extent, was the main purpose of the exercise.

There is little doubt that the Dayton peace accord and the presence of international forces in the Balkans under Nato's command have reduced hostilities and bloodshed to a minimum. But it is equally true that the entire operation was the product of a political tussle that was conducted with three main actors: the US military, Washington's politicians and, finally, America and its European allies. The US administration pushed for the introduction of Nato troops after sponsoring the Dayton accords. Yet in doing so, Washington was fully aware that the slightest error (especially one resulting in the death of US soldiers) will harm President Clinton's re-election campaign; while any achievement, however substantial, is unlikely to affect the US elections a great deal.

The outcome was an uneasy compromise which made great sense in Western capitals, but which was irrelevant for local Bosnian needs. Nato, for instance, can arrest war criminals if they come across Western lines, but cannot go out hunting for them; it can open roads, but not enforce the return of refugees; and it can ensure peace during the election periods, but had no clear duty to help the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in holding these elections or enforcing their subsequent results.

The entire project of Bosnia's elections was destined to turn into a bureaucratic nightmare. After four years of fighting in which at least a quarter of the population was either killed or forcibly removed, the people of the republic were expected to hold a snap vote for unfamiliar institutions created by a constitution that is still to be implemented. Furthermore, they cast their votes on the basis of electoral rolls last compiled in 1991, well before the carnage started. Most European governments and every international humanitarian agency involved in Bosnia warned of the dangers of holding elections under such haphazard circumstances. But the US administration, which pushed for this idea, had other calculations.

Washington's official justification was that elections now would cement the peace. The US also argued that the elections will remove from power the war barons; faced with the choice between reconstruction or war, the Bosnians will be sure to elect the angels of peace. Americans have a tradition of believing that any disease, however severe, can be cured with a good election and a new constitution. In the case of Bosnia, however, both instruments served little practical value. The republic had a constitution almost identical to the one that the US wants to enforce today, complete with a rotating presidency. This did not prevent Bosnia from breaking up, and recreating a similar legal scheme now is unlikely to reverse the results of this fighting. Nor are the Bosnians strangers to the electoral process: many of the nationalist leaders who have been confirmed in power were originally elected in largely free votes five years ago. The US officials who invented the scheme knew these facts all too well. Their main aim in holding the vote now was to provide a convenient end for the Western military intervention in the Balkans which, miraculously, just happened to coincide with the US elections.

All of Bosnia's leaders were aware of America's desperation to stick to the original timetable decreed by the Dayton accord. So they went through the motions, campaigning for seats in the republic's supposedly multi-ethnic institutions on political platforms that promised precisely the opposite. More importantly, they blocked all attempts to have truly fair elections. An open vote does not consist of merely a proper counting of the ballot papers: it also depends on free access to the media, and an open exchange of opinions throughout the campaign.

NOTHING of the kind happened. Opposition leaders in all three communities were intimidated, elections for local authorities had to be postponed in the face of massive voter-registration frauds, and a television station established with Western money and intended to allow free publicity for all candidates was prevented from operating by the Bosnian government. The result is a republic that supposedly has democratic institutions at the top but none at the local level, and the legitimation of tribalism. President Izetbegovic may claim that he is the leader of a republic; in fact, he has been reduced to being the leader of Bosnia's Muslims, and forced to share power with the Croat and Serb leaders responsible for his country's carve-up.

In the coming weeks, these realities will be papered over by a series of Western initiatives. But the long-term prospects for Bosnia are already clear: an ethnic partition which theoretically is accepted by nobody, but ultimately supported by everyone. Cyprus has been in this position for two decades; Bosnia is next in line.

And the elections are unlikely to provide Western countries with much respite from the Balkans. European governments contributing troops to Bosnia have known for many months that, despite all their claims to the contrary, they will remain in the Balkans after the end of this year. The only condition that the Europeans insist on is that US forces should also stay, for they fear that otherwise all the disputes between America and Europe over future policies in Yugoslavia will resurface.

The outcome may have been inevitable. But it is a travesty to suggest that it is either honourable or just. The truth remains that ethnic cleansing has succeeded, and territorial changes accomplished by force still work, even in Europe.

Jonathan Eyal is Director of Studies at the Royal United Services Institute in London

Britain's painful dilemma over schools

When will UK politicians proclaim the virtues of selective education for all, asks **John Gray**

IN THE raucous political debate about education there is one curious area of silence. No one mentions private schools. A generation ago it was a defining issue between the parties. Labour argued that Britain could not be a classless society so long as it contained privileged independent schools. The Tories held that private education was an expression of the freedom of people to spend their own money as they choose.

Both sides accepted that what governments do about private schooling will make a large difference to the sort of country Britain is. The issue between them was not settled. It was too fundamental to be resolved in the culture of compromise that ruled British politics before Thatcher came to power. But Britain's two-tier schooling system did not vanish from political discourse. It remained a bitterly contested territory in the national debate about education.

Only now that the Thatcher episode is plainly over have independent schools entered a political safe haven. For all parties they have become a no-go area, sheltered from debate by a new consensus on their insignificance. Yet the realities are at odds with this post-Thatcherite consensus.

If private schools are so unimportant, why do parents scrape and save to pay the fees for them? How do we explain the fact that 80 per cent of 15-year-olds at independent schools gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A to C, against a national average of 43 per cent? Why is it that, though around 7 per cent of Britain's children go to private schools, nine out of ten of them go on to make up around a quarter of the students in higher education?

For the right, these facts show state schools to be inherently inferior institutions. For the left they show only that state schools have been starved of resources. No one questions why Britain alone among European countries should have a private-sector education system that produces consistently better results than state schools.

Few ask why there is nothing resembling Britain's two-nation schooling system in any other Western democracy — except, ominously, in the United States, where a ruthless overclass is withdrawing from all public institutions into fortress-like "plantations".

The answer may be found in an anecdote that George Walden tells in his path-breaking and potentially pivotal book We Should Know Better: Solving The Education Crisis (Fourth Estate, £9.99). Walden, the free-thinking Tory MP who was Minister of Higher Education under Margaret Thatcher, was sent by her to China, where he had worked as a diplomat, to represent Britain at the opening of a new university.

During his visit he talked with the Chinese minister of education, who was struggling to repair the devastation of the Cultural Revolution and was interested in British experience. The minister asked Walden if it was true that all secondary children were sent to the same type of school. Walden said that, broadly speaking, it was — the schools were called comprehensives. After a period of silence the minister asked if, in Britain, children of different abilities were put not just in the same schools but in the same classes. That too, Walden replied, was often done.

"The minister's face", Walden writes, "was a caricature of incredulity . . . the minister declined to take things further: causing foreign guests embarrassment by pressing them on their curious customs would be impolite. Already I felt like Marco Polo describing inexplicable Western practices to Kublai Khan."

The Chinese minister of education's disbelief can be found almost everywhere in the world. All of the East Asian countries, including Japan, take selective schooling for granted as an aspect of their meritocratic Confucian traditions and as a vital condition of their economic success. No communist or post-communist state has ever had anything resembling British comprehensive education. All European countries apart from Britain have gymnasia systems in which pupils with different abilities go to different schools.

In Britain alone is selective state education reviled as a species of educational apartheid. And only in Britain is there segregation of pupils into two races, destined for unequal development in separate systems of schooling.

There is a tacit educational settlement in Britain, whereby a privileged private sector flourishes in comfortable coexistence with underperforming state schools. This settlement has always been anomalous. Its persistence now is an absurdity — particularly for New Labour.

It is one of New Labour's axioms that there cannot be economic renewal in Britain without educational reform. In a world in which, more than ever before, knowledge and skills make the difference between national wealth and poverty, no economic policy can compensate for poor schools. Moreover Labour's modernisers accept that the days of redistribution through the tax system are over.

SOCIAL JUSTICE for them means equal opportunity — a fairer primary distribution of skills and talents. But how can these admirable one-nation ideals be reconciled with a two-nation school system in which all the unfairness of inherited British class structures is magnified by widening economic inequalities? How can Labour promote social mobility when selection by merit is prohibited in the state sector and an affluent minority chooses to buy its children out of it? In these circumstances there is a fundamental conflict between New Labour's meritocratic commitment to equal opportunity and Old Labour's egalitarian opposition to selection in state schools.

Walden makes it unambiguously clear that he does not favour abolition of private schools. Instead he advocates policies that encourage private schools gradually to join the state sector. He demands the abolition of the grubby and costly — on current projections around £200 million a year — Assisted Places Scheme. Departing from both Tory and New Labour orthodoxies, he urges that an extra £5 billion a year be spent on state schools.

But, as he acknowledges, such added resources will not end two-nation schooling unless the overarching commitment to "the comprehensive ideal" is dropped. Schools such as Manchester Grammar School will not re-enter the state sector unless they retain fully the freedom to admit pupils selectively on academic merit. The middle classes will not opt back into the state sector until they are convinced that it is as successful as independent schools in teaching children according to their differing abilities.

Britain cannot go back to the wasteful and cruel one-off selection practised in the 11-plus. Yet, if we are to track the more successful systems of other European countries, we will need to develop forms of selection that go well beyond policies of "setting" — placing children with varying abilities in different subjects into separate classes — that are currently being discussed. Teaching by ability may mean different schools as well as separate classes. This is a nettle that, stung by the Harman affair — Labour's Dreyfus Case, as Walden calls it — New Labour has yet to grasp.

It should be clear to everyone that a far-reaching shift of educational theory and practice is under way in Britain. The experience of a generation is being radically reassessed. There can be no doubt that, as Tony Blair and David Blunkett have recognised, quality has been sacrificed for equality in many primary and comprehensive schools. There is also good evidence that, on most relevant measures, British schoolchildren are a year or more behind their counterparts in comparable countries.

The most fundamental defect of British education is the one it is least politically convenient to mention. It is the division of children into separate castes that arises inexorably from large economic inequalities, in combination with a state sector in which selection on merit is discouraged.

As long as this endures, no one can seriously claim that Britain has been modernised.

John Gray is a a political philosopher and Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford

Britain 'squeezing Third World debtors'

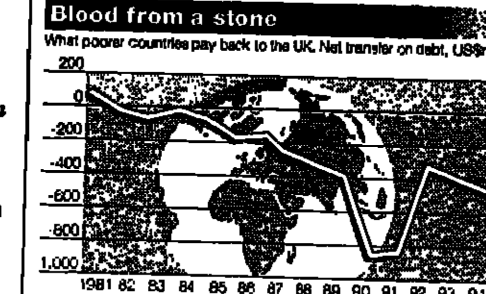
ACCORDING to aid agency figures, Britain is squeezing cash out of the world's poorest countries by demanding levels of debt repayment which far outweigh new loans or aid, *Richard Thompson reports.*

As representatives of the world's richest creditor nations met in Paris this week to discuss initiatives to reduce the debt burden on the developing world, aid agencies say the first comprehensive analysis of lender countries undermines the British government's claim to be at the forefront of the campaign to help the world's poor.

A spokesperson for Christian Aid said: "It is quite simply morally wrong that one of the world's richest countries should be getting more money out of the world's poorest than it puts in. The very last thing these countries need is to be shelling out like this."

The European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad) — a Brussels-based umbrella group including Christian Aid, Cafod and Oxfam — has undertaken the first country-by-country survey of the main creditor nations.

A copy of the research, obtained by the Guardian, shows Britain has been a net recipient of cash from the Third World since 1981. The paper shows that, of the nations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), only the US has a longer record of taking more money from the developing world than it gives out.



The figures will add to pressure on the OECD member states to relax repayment schedules. The World Bank is trying to squeeze a commitment to more generous debt relief before the bank's annual meeting in Washington next week, where a British-backed package to help "heavily indebted poor countries" (HIPCs) will be on the table.

The Christian Aid spokesperson said: "This study throws into stark relief just how much needs to be achieved in the next 10 days. Britain has a good record of taking the lead in negotiations, but in the end we have to put our money where our mouth is."

An official at the Overseas Development Agency declined to comment on the Eurodad report before publication this week, but insisted Britain had a good record on aid.

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke is prepared to increase the slice of outstanding loans which can be written off from 67 per cent to 80 or 90 per cent. But several lenders, in particular Japan, have refused to offer anything more than the possibility of more generous relief on a case-by-case basis.

An announcement on the HIPC initiative involving a trust fund to pay off debts is expected in Washington next week. The World Bank is lobbying the OECD nations for a more concrete commitment on cuts in bilateral debt. The bank has pledged $2 billion to the HIPC initiative. But officials point out that the eligibility criteria stipulate that only debt accumulated before any loan rescheduling is eligible for relief. This would rule out many of the world's poorest nations from significant assistance.

An internal World Bank paper issued this month estimates that even with an 80 per cent cut-off, the eligibility rules mean that in practice only 17 per cent of bilateral debt could be written off.

Christian Aid said that because many loans to poor countries were conditional on the purchase of British goods, Britain gained doubly. "We benefit from the increased exports, and then again from the interest on the loans given to buy these exports."

In Brief

SUMITOMO Corporation, the Japanese conglomerate whose chief copper trader, Yasuo Hamanaka, rigged the world market in the metal for a decade, admitted that the bill for the débâcle had risen by almost half to $2.6 billion.

SERIOUS Fraud Office investigators are expected to move into the wreckage of former Morgan Grenfell fund-manager Peter Young's empire. Hard evidence allegedly showing personal gain to have been a key motive in his activities has provided the green light for a full-blown SFO inquiry. Mr Young has been dismissed by Morgan Grenfell for "gross misconduct".

SOUTH African relations with the European Union were dealt a blow when the European Commission came out against a $74.4 million loan to help build a steel plant near Cape Town. The decision reflected concern that the project would boost world capacity when Europe's own steel industry is struggling.

MINISTERS are preparing to give the controversial proposed alliance between British Airways and American Airlines a considerable lift by deciding not to refer it to the Monopolies and Merger Commission. But BA will be expected in return to relinquish its stranglehold on access to Heathrow airport.

BRITAIN'S high streets are enjoying their biggest boom since the late 1980s, rekindling government hopes that public optimism about the economy will provide the foundation stone for political recovery before the election. Data from the Office for National Statistics showed retail sales up 1 per cent in August.

SPECULATION that Rupert Murdoch is grooming his elder son to take over the running of the News Corporation media empire intensified when it emerged that Lachlan — 25 years old this month — has been promoted to managing director of News Limited, the Australian operation, less than a year after he was made deputy chief executive.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates September 23	Sterling rates September 16
Australia	1.9640-1.9663	1.9740-1.9760
Austria	16.56-16.58	16.52-16.54
Belgium	48.46-48.55	48.34-48.32
Canada	2.1270-2.1288	2.1327-2.1343
Denmark	9.04-9.05	9.04-9.06
France	7.96-7.98	8.00-8.01
Germany	2.3551-2.3573	2.3491-2.3509
Hong Kong	12.03-12.04	12.03-12.04
Ireland	0.9710-0.9725	0.9659-0.9671
Italy	2.368-2,371	2,370-2,373
Japan	170.90-171.12	171.73-171.90
Netherlands	2.6398-2.6427	2.6336-2.6354
New Zealand	2.2290-2.2317	2.2398-2.2420
Norway	10.05-10.06	10.06-10.07
Portugal	239.78-240.04	240.00-240.21
Spain	198.08-198.24	198.00-198.13
Sweden	10.26-10.28	10.31-10.33
Switzerland	1.9213-1.9237	1.9290-1.9313
USA	1.5465-1.5573	1.5565-1.5571
ECU	1.2370-1.2379	1.2408-1.2416

FTSE100 Share Index down 67.5 at 3916.7. FTSE 250 Index down 67.4 at 4394.5. Gold down $1.75 at $381.00.

Clarke in eye of Euro storm

Guardian Reporters

THE BRITISH government was embroiled in a fresh civil war over Europe after the weekend summit of finance ministers in Dublin launched the final push for the formation of a single currency in less than two-and-a-half years' time.

With Brussels announcing the start of the countdown to a 1999 start date, the UK Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, enraged Tory Eurosceptics by claiming Britain should sign up with the other eight likely candidates for monetary union "if it was in the national interest".

Some Eurosceptics called for Mr Clarke to step down as Chancellor after he agreed with Jacques Santer, European Commission president, that "the movement to a single currency in 1999 is now irreversible".

John Redwood, a former cabinet minister, said: "I think it is a great pity that the Chancellor has damaged the unity of the Government . . . The Government's one policy on this is they want to keep open all options."

However, Mr Clarke was unrepentant, rounding on "rent-a-quote critics" and backing the six Tory grandees who in a joint letter last week called for a more positive approach to a single currency.

Amid signs that the Maastricht convergence criteria for membership will be applied flexibly to include as many countries as possible, European Union officials said that Germany, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland and Finland were set to be part of the project from the outset. They are hopeful that the European economy is emerging from recession and that this will help countries to reduce budget deficits over the next two years.

Asked if he envisaged France, Germany and a couple of other countries setting up monetary union with Britain waiting on the sidelines, Mr Clarke replied: "No. I hope that doesn't happen. That would be the worst policy of all — of the British doing their traditional business of not being able to make their minds up and then joining late. That would be pathetic."



Bold face . . . A confident Kenneth Clarke answers press questions during the EU finance summit in Dublin PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN LAMARQUE

Werner Hoyer, Germany's key EU official, was adamant that the most important decisions on the proposed single currency had been taken by the finance ministers.

But for most of those countries eager to sign up for monetary union, the political commitment is the easiest part of a three-stage process. From now on, they have to get their economies into shape and win over their voters.

Despite the upbeat mood in Dublin, Europe's sluggish economic performance during the 1990s has made the Maastricht criteria for qualification for a single currency much more difficult to achieve.

These stipulate that countries have to meet targets for inflation, interest rates, exchange rates, government deficits and state debt. In 1991, when the treaty was signed, seven countries met at least four out of five conditions, and three other putative members — Finland, Sweden and Austria — would have qualified as well.

By 1995, only five countries — Germany, Luxembourg, France, Ireland and Denmark — were on course to fulfil four of the five conditions. Furthermore, the outlook for 1996 is for even fewer countries to make the grade.

The Germans are worried not so much about the launch as to what happens afterwards. This was the reason for last year's proposal from Theo Waigel, the finance minister, for a euro stability pact governing fiscal propriety after 1999.

In the interests of Bundesbank rigour, the Germans want automatic fines within six months for members whose budget deficits exceed 3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) once EMU is launched. The fines, initially non-interest bearing deposits with the European Central Bank, would be hefty, from 0.2 to 0.5 per cent of GDP.

While wannabe monetary union members pay lip-service to the merits of the German proposal, the stability pact details are being diluted.

It now looks as though there will be no "automaticity" in levelling the fines, and that the European Commission and national governments will have a say. In other words, the decision to fine fiscal delinquents will be as much a political as an economic one.

Pension firm bets on crash

Paul Murphy and Pauline Springett

ONE of Britain's biggest managers of pension money said last week it intended to stick with an extraordinary $15 billion bet that stock markets in Britain and the US are grossly over-valued and that share prices are due to crash.

PDFM, formerly known as Phillips & Drew Fund Management, which controls funds worth $75 billion, is so convinced Britain is about to face its biggest stock market crash since October 1987 that it has already effectively cost the pension funds it manages $4.5 billion during its 18-month gamble.

The FT all-share index has advanced by a third since January last year. But PDFM, part of the investment banking conglomerate, Union Bank of Switzerland, decided in an unprecedented move at about that time to hold up to 15 per cent of the assets under its management in cash.

That meant PDFM, and the funds it manages, has missed out on one of the biggest stock market rallies in recent years. It trails in the City's league tables, currently under-performing by more than 6 per cent.

The pension funds which invest through PDFM include some of Britain's biggest companies. They are furious at the strategy, and are threatening to sack PDFM and take their business elsewhere.

But Paul Yates, PDFM's marketing director, insisted the firm would not alter its views. "We are sticking with our strategy, absolutely," he said. "The degree of over-valuation in the UK and US stock markets is unprecedented."

Mr Yates admitted that several clients — who range from drugs giant Glaxo to Edinburgh university — had voiced concerns. The bet has involved PDFM progressively reducing its holdings of shares and instead building up a mountain of un-invested cash, now thought to top $10 billion.

Gadafy stays one step ahead of opposition

Gilles Paris in Tripoli

WHEN the artificial "great river", which is fed by fossil water extracted from the depths of the Libyan desert, was inaugurated earlier this month with all the lavish trappings of a Hollywood spectacular, it gushed out of the city's antiquated conduits and flooded the streets.

While that was going on, Colonel Muammar Gadafy, in a marathon speech of the kind he gives every year when commemorating the revolution of September 1969, spelled out new measures to avert an evil which, he said, was threatening to swamp Libyan society: easy money gained from corruption and speculation.

The "Guide of the Revolution" had already given a hint of what was to come at the end of May, when he set up 80 "purge committees" whose task was to remodel Libya's two-tier economy, then suffering from galloping inflation.

Since then, in Tripoli's upper-crust districts, there have been massive shutdowns of stores that used to overflow with exorbitantly priced Western goods — and which contrasted unflatteringly with state co-operatives that stocked only a few subsidised staples.

Following a press advertising campaign encouraging Libyans to inform on each other, the news filtered out that several VIPs had been placed under house arrest in the suburbs of Tripoli.

Earlier this month, travellers arriving in Egypt from Libya revealed that there had been a swoop on more than 1,000 shopkeepers in the country's second-largest city, Benghazi, and that their stores had been sealed.

Unauthorised money-changers, who used to be found everywhere in Tripoli only a few months ago (and who offered a rate of three dinars to the dollar, as against the official rate of three dollars to the dinar), are now much more cautious and often deliberately turn down potential clients by graphically drawing a thumb across their throats.

In his commemoration speech, Gadafy said he was delighted with the diligence of the purge committees. They consist chiefly of young soldiers, to whom he has virtually given *carte blanche*.

Shopkeepers and members of the small business nomenklatura, whose affairs used to be allowed to thrive, are not the only section of the population that has suffered from Gadafy's change of policy.

According to the Arab daily, Al Sharq al Awsat, at least one colonel and several dozen senior civil servants have also got into trouble with the committees. The campaign has had repercussions in every sector of the economy, including the country's vital oil industry. Meanwhile the authorities have pledged to restock state stores in an attempt to improve the daily lot of the middle classes.

Western diplomats in Tripoli believe there are ulterior political motives behind the current drive on the economic front. Gadafy has taken advantage of his sudden crackdown on speculation, which he himself allowed to flourish after introducing a policy of economic openness at the beginning of the nineties, to get rid of a few political figures who could eventually prove a threat to him.

But after 27 years, the wear and tear of being in power is beginning to show. This was evident from the rather lukewarm reception spectators gave the military parade organised in Tripoli for the anniversary of the revolution, and from the far from full house at the football stadium that watched a show reminiscent of the great communist pageants of the sixties.



Gadafy: the 'Guide of the Revolution' has always shown great skill in manipulating the forces at work in Libya

Another, more serious sign that the Gadafy regime is running out of steam is the guerrilla movement that has established itself since March in the mountains near the town of Derna, east of Benghazi.

"The government never goes so far as to suggest it is running into difficulties," notes an observer. "Yet it did precisely that in a recent communique announcing it had carried out land and air manoeuvres using 'live ammunition'. This was an attempt to justify bombing raids in March and August that were unlikely to have gone unnoticed."

Although he is coming up against more resistance than he is used to, Gadafy still rules Libya with an iron fist. "There is no evidence to corroborate the claim by the flood of communiqués the government has sent to London-based Arab newspapers that disorders in Benghazi are the result of an Islamist upsurge," says a diplomat. "Although such groups may exist, their effectiveness is probably limited and, more importantly, the Islamic opposition in Benghazi and the more tribally-based opposition in Derna do not form a united front."

Libya's reasonable standard of living compared with that of neighbouring countries, thanks to oil revenues, and Gadafy's "modernised" yet anti-Western Islam have not been conducive to the emergence of fundamentalist groups.

The "Guide" has always shown great skill in manipulating the various forces at work in Libya — the army, the still well-structured tribes, and the institutions established after the 1969 revolution.

It is evident, from the way he plays them against each other, constantly setting up new committees that bypass long-established ones, or reshuffling the military hierarchy as he did during his anti-corruption drive, that at the age of 54 Gadafy still has plenty of mileage left.

This can also be seen from the fact that Libya, five years after being subjected to an air and military embargo on the grounds that the regime had had a hand in the Lockerbie and UTA plane downings, has managed to some extent to emerge from its diplomatic quarantine.

The D'Amato-Kennedy law recently signed by President Bill Clinton, which sets out to penalise companies investing in Libya's oil industry, has caused serious cracks to appear in the Western coalition.

Gadafy made an effort to bring about a rapprochement with his Arab "brothers" at last June's Cairo summit. The meeting's final communiqué recalled the "unfair" way Libya was being treated, but also reaffirmed the need to continue the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which Tripoli had regularly denounced in the past.

(September 18)

North Korean regime embarks on a capitalist experiment

Philippe Pons in Rajin

IT IS just possible that the sleepy little port of Rajin, at the northeastern tip of North Korea where it borders on China and Russia, will one day turn out to be the focal point of the "revolution" which the world's last Stalinist dinosaur hopes will revive its dying economy.

Pyongyang, capital of a country that describes itself as a "workers' paradise", has begun to try to attract foreign investment by drawing attention to its "comparative advantages" and "added value", which are bound to generate "capitalist" profit. Kim Jong U, president of the Committee for Foreign Economic Co-operation, has said: "Irrespective of ideologies, political systems or the existence or otherwise of diplomatic relations, all investment is welcome."

The UN-sponsored forum on the Rajin-Sonbong economic zone, held in Rajin from September 13-15 and attended by nearly 400 potential investors, was part of the same campaign. It was the most spectacular public relations exercise ever embarked on by Pyongyang. It also turned out to be profitable, since it resulted in the signing of 14 contracts worth a total of $826 million.

Rajin and Sonbong are small neighbouring ports where troops of young red-scarved "pioneers" chant revolutionary songs as they march to and from school. Behind broad avenues lined with little office blocks there is a maze of tiny unpaved streets and old brick houses dating from the period of Japanese colonisation.

At crossroads, policewomen wearing white uniforms and black boots make robot-like gestures as they direct non-existent traffic. The sluggish, silent atmosphere recalls that of Chinese cities during Mao's reign.

To emphasise the region's new international calling, small shops sport quaint signs in English, such as "Youth Barber" and "Tailor Shop". Poster hoardings vaunting the merits of the Japanese corporation Sharp and the Thai telecommunications company Loxley (which has just equipped Rajin-Sonbong with an international telephone network) are in stark contrast with murals glorifying the revolution and the "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung, who died in 1994 but "is forever with us".

North Korea is poised to embrace the market economy. The brightest of the few neon signs that light up Rajin's streets at night is that of the International Club, a Chinese-run cabaret complete with hostesses and masseuses that caters for Chinese, the occasional Westerner, and Koreans by invitation only. It is the only place in Rajin where it is not *de rigueur* to wear Kim Il Sung badges.

People familiar with this part of North Korea say that in the past four years the face of Rajin-Sonbong has completely changed. The region, which now has 130,000 inhabitants, was for 45 years a remote outpost on the heavily militarised border of North Korea, China and the then Soviet Union. But in 1991 it was marked out as North Korea's first special economic zone.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, Pyongyang's main provider of funds, combined with changes in China and the economic decline of North Korea itself, forced the government to scrap its earlier philosophy of self-reliance and open up its economy.

Pyongyang is keen to preclude the possibly adverse side-effects of over-hasty liberalisation and to contain a process that could spell the end of the regime. The Rajin-Sonbong project is an experiment that is being deliberately carried out in a forgotten corner of the country to limit any risk of "contamination".

But if it succeeds, it will provide political ammunition for those North Koreans who realise their country needs to evolve but are thwarted by the hard core of believers in Kim Il Sungism. The Rajin-Sonbong zone also lies at the heart of a colossal programme to develop the Tumen river region launched by the UN Development Programme in 1992. The programme comprises parts of the Chinese province of Jilin and the Russian border territory of Primorye. The ports of Rajin and Sonbong are destined to become the points of entry into what the project's promoters call the "Golden Triangle" of northeast Asia.

NORTH KOREA has thrown all its resources into building infrastructure for the project. Everywhere men and women are hard at work with picks and shovels. The army has been mobilised to construct the 40km road linking Rajin to the Wonjong bridge over the Tumen river, which forms the border between North Korea and China.

Although the zone seems certain to play an important role as a transit centre, its industrial development has got off to a rather shaky start. The huge fenced area earmarked for foreign companies' facilities remains empty, as does the site on Sonbong harbour where Shell is thinking of building storage tanks.

In the past year 50 investment project contracts have been signed to the tune of $350 million, but only 22 projects (worth $34 million) have actually taken shape. Investors include Japanese-based Koreans and Chinese from Taiwan, Hong Kong and the mainland.

Since the end of the Soviet Union, North Korea's economy has been in free fall. According to estimates by the Bank of Korea in Seoul, output has slumped by 25 per cent. The floods of 1995 and 1996 caused serious food shortages in some regions. In 1995 Pyongyang asked for international aid after recognising that the third phase of its seven-year economic plan had failed.

Notably absent from the forum were the South Koreans, the only businesspeople who are prepared to take risks in North Korea. Seoul abruptly cancelled its participation when Pyongyang said it wanted the South Korean delegation halved.

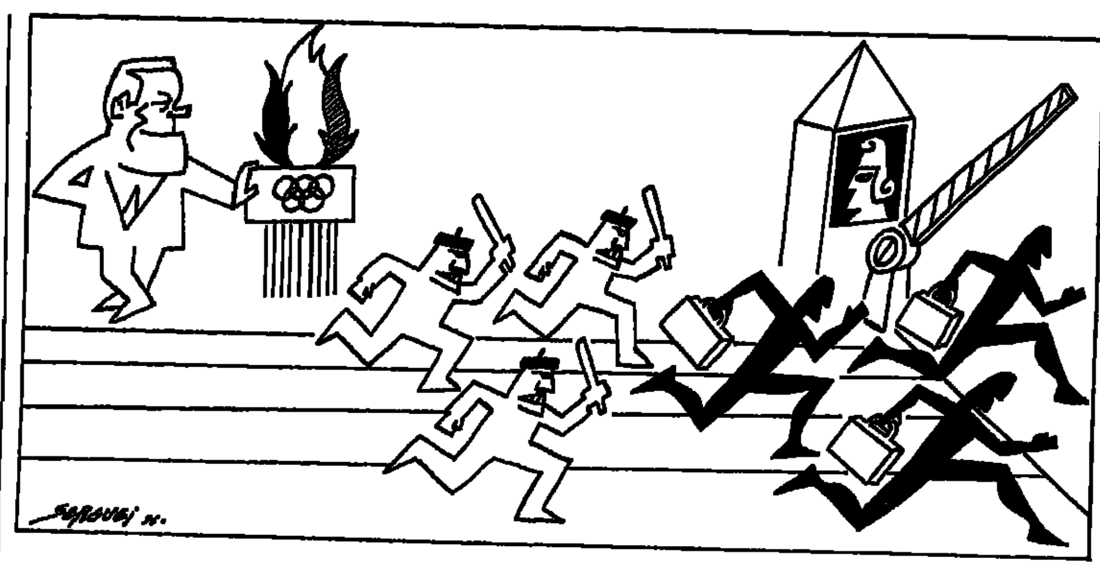
Several question marks still hang over the Rajin-Sonbong project. On top of uncertainties about infrastructure and a not very competitive minimum wage of $80 per month (as compared with China's $50-$60), there is the problem of North Korea's poor credit rating — it has failed to pay back loans and has a foreign debt of $8 billion.

But whatever happens, it can safely be said that North Korea is no longer the inward-looking fortress it used to be.

(September 19)

National Front: irritant that won't go away

Patrick Jarreau



AT A TIME when the government is attending to such serious matters as the draft 1997 budget, due to be approved at this week's cabinet meeting, the political limelight has been hogged by a party that has nothing whatsoever to say on the subject.

Is it a good idea to cut income tax, as the government proposes to do? Is the budget deficit too big or too small? Has the government got its priorities right, in so far as they can be identified?

On none of these issues does the National Front (FN) have anything to say, apart from a few airy slogans about the need to abolish income tax altogether. It prefers to talk about something else, because in so doing it ensures that it itself gets talked about.

And as always in the 15 years or so since it began to emerge as a major political player, the FN poses the same problem: on the one hand the party has clearly failed in all its attempts to get close to governance; and on the other, it has become a permanent fixture on the political landscape and achieved far from negligible gains locally; and its ideas on pet issues such as race and security are shared by a far higher number of people than those who actually vote for the party.

The 1983 local elections put the FN on the political map. But after that none of its achievements — its breakthrough at the 1984 European elections, its entry into parliament and regional councils in 1986, its 1988 pact with Jean-Claude Gaudin in Marseille — enabled the FN's leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, to move any closer to participating in a coalition government.

Subsequently, nudged by the neo-Gaullist Alain Juppé and the centre-right François Léotard, the mainstream right shifted from a position of ambiguity *vis-à-vis* Le Pen to a strict demarcation between republican parties and the far right.

The FN was marginalised at the 1992 regional elections. That trend was confirmed by the Maastricht referendum that same year, and accentuated at the 1993 general election. Last year's presidential poll showed that the minds of voters are exercised more by major issues than by the FN's trouble-making.

At the same time, other developments have belied the comfy view that the FN is no more than a social, or "societal", symptom which, although a cause for concern, has no effect on the country's general political drift.

First, at the 1995 local elections the far right won a large city, Toulon, and two medium-sized towns, Marignane and Orange, which provided it with a showcase in a region where it now seems perfectly adapted to local sociological patterns.

Even though it has ceased to gain any more electoral ground in the south of France, the FN has become a key fact of political life along the Mediterranean coast and the Provençal hinterland. What do Perpignan, Montpellier, Marseille, Nice and Avignon have in common? A strong FN presence.

The second point is that while *lepénisme* is institutionally ineffectual, it is socially influential and electorally threatening. The FN's ability to make a nuisance of itself is evident in the repeated political blunders made by both leftwing and rightwing governments: far-right pressure has patently affected the decisions and attitudes of France's republican leaders — to wit President François Mitterrand's talk in 1989 of a "tolerance threshold", or last month's decision by President Jacques Chirac and the prime minister, Juppé, to send in security forces to evict illegal immigrants who had taken refuge in St Bernard's Church in Paris.

The government is considering changing the electoral system to include a degree of proportional representation, which would help the FN to gain a foothold in the National Assembly. It has thus implicitly admitted that it is afraid of losing the second round of the 1998 general election if FN candidates were to maintain their candidacy or advise their supporters not to vote for government candidates.

The exchange of views between the political and intellectual communities on the question of what to do about the FN has so far proved sterile. Politicians tend to send intellectuals back to their drawing-boards with advice along the lines of: instead of posturing and jumping up and down every time Le Pen or his supporters come out with an outrageous statement, go and look at what's happening out there in society, come up with some explanation, give us advice.

Intellectuals respond with countercharges of game-playing. In their view, politicians of the mainstream right try to appeal to Le Pen voters so as to boost their own chances of beating the left, and their leftwing opponents are not unhappy to see some sections of the electorate vote for Le Pen rather than for the mainstream right.

Meanwhile the FN does its best, whenever it gets a chance, to jack up its "tolerance threshold" a little more. It now feels able to preach, in the words of its leader, "the inequality of races" and to organise a demonstration to protest against the murder of a 15-year-old boy by another youngster — once it had managed to establish the Moroccan origins of the suspect.

Ever since Charles Maurras, the standard-bearer of Action Française, made his notorious distinction between the "legal country" and the "real country", the far right has never been able to make any political headway without resorting to that kind of rhetoric.

Fortunately, it nowadays has to reckon with the checks and balances of civilian society, as manifested by the massive movement of social unrest at the end of last year and the emergence, under Robert Hue, of a Communist Party that has gradually shaken off the Soviet trappings which its previous leader, Georges Marchais, left in place for far too long.

It used to be claimed that the FN had succeeded in winning over swaths of the working-class vote, after trade union activism and militant leftwing dissent had lost much of their vigour under two Socialist governments. That argument now looks seriously dented.

Nevertheless, in the past 15 years the FN has conquered new territory, and there is nothing to suggest it will easily be forced to beat a retreat. Indeed, FN leaders even dream of circumstances under which they could make further gains.

To meet that challenge to the republic, the mainstream right and the left will have to honour their respective pledges to "modernise" political life or "change its rules".

(September 17)

Le Pen's party blows its cover

Olivier Biffaud and Gérard Courtois

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN, leader of the far-right National Front (FN), caused controversy once again two weeks ago when he said he believed in "the inequality of races".

On television last Sunday, the day after he had tried to make political capital out of the funeral of a 15-year-old Marseille boy who had been stabbed to death by a youngster of Moroccan origin, he put it in a slightly different way, claiming that some races were "more equal than others".

Reactions to Le Pen's latest outburst have been unanimously hostile right across the political spectrum. There have been calls for him to be prosecuted for "incitement to racial hatred". However, this has been ruled out by the justice minister, Jacques Toubon: the law takes account only of remarks directed at persons belonging to a "particular ethnic group, nation, race or religion".

The FN adopted a deliberate strategy of provocation in the late eighties. For three years running, Le Pen made remarks that led to his being prosecuted and fined. In 1987 he described the Nazi gas chambers as "a point of detail" in the history of the second world war. In 1988 he made a pun on the name of a minister, calling him "Durafour-crématoire" (four = oven). The following year he denounced "international Jewry", which he said was creating "an anti-national spirit".

Le Pen's latest act of defiance clearly reveals the FN's racist ideology. It seems that the party has finally decided to stop denying the obvious and say out loud what its opponents have always accused it of secretly believing. Those who are tempted to support the FN in future will now at least know who they are voting for.

Successive surveys show that the FN's ideology has gradually lost its ability to shock public opinion. An opinion poll conducted by Ipsos last week for the daily Libération revealed that only 33 per cent of interviewees were "very shocked" by Le Pen's remarks on the "inequality of races"; 30 per cent were "fairly shocked", 11 per cent "not really very shocked" and 14 per cent "not shocked at all".

Quite apart from the race issue, the FN is slowly gaining ideological ground in public opinion: 42 per cent of people regard it as "a party like any other" and a "useful" party. And while 66 per cent today believe that Le Pen's movement is "dangerous for democracy", more people (71 per cent) gave an affirmative answer to the same question in a Sofres/Le Monde poll conducted last March.

Of those who do not feel in sympathy with the FN, 44 per cent disapprove of all its ideas, but almost as many (40 per cent) approve of some of its ideas.

(September 14 and 17)

The chairman, the cash and the trickster

Hervé Gattegno

ANNA ROSE THIAM, the latest person to give evidence in the course of corruption investigations involving the oil group Elf Aquitaine and Maurice Bidermann's ready-to-wear companies, was flanked by gendarmes when she recently met investigating magistrate Eva Joly.

Thiam, a confidence trickster from Ivory Coast, who has been detained in Fresnes jail since the summer of 1993, reportedly told Joly she had received cash sums from the former chairman of Elf Aquitaine, Loïk Le Floch-Prigent (now in prison), which she says she was supposed to pass on to others.

Thiam, the daughter of a former Ivory Coast ambassador to France, used to be a high roller and regular patron of fashionable night clubs. An attractive 35-year-old who passed herself off as Lise, daughter of the late Ivorian president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, she induced her victims to make "safe" investments in juicy financial deals.

During an earlier spell in Baumettes prison, in Marseille, Thiam absconded when on leave in 1992. Police picked up her trail a year later in Paris, where she had managed to wheedle some 500,000 francs ($100,000) out of 10 new victims, including, allegedly, the best-selling author Paul-Lou Sulitzer. Houphouët-Boigny's family had lodged a complaint against her for "impersonation".

A property developer who had also fallen into Thiam's clutches told police he had accompanied "Lise" to Elf's headquarters in Paris, where she allegedly picked up money.

Police investigations would seem to confirm the existence of contacts between Thiam and Le Floch-Prigent, who became chairman of the French national railways (SNCF) after leaving Elf. The print-out of telephone calls she made from her flat apparently showed she had rung several private numbers within the Elf group, including the chairman's direct line, and had called Bidermann's home several times.

Another witness has alleged: "Lise told me one day that she knew 'Loïk' very well and could come and go as she pleased at Elf's headquarters, and that when she needed money she would go and see him."

Police would have liked Le Floch-Prigent, when he was still chairman of Elf, to have given evidence or to have lodged a complaint. But all they got was confirmation from his private secretary that a meeting had taken place with "a young coloured woman who said she was the daughter of the Ivorian president".

One of Le Floch-Prigent's advisers, a policeman on secondment, said that he had received orders to find out more about Thiam, and was then instructed to keep her at a distance.

Thiam eluded the police until June 1993, when she was arrested in Germany, where she had successfully conned several more people.

Meanwhile police had spotted her car parked in Evian near the Swiss border. Inside, they found a handwritten note signed "Loïk" which read: "Here are 53. The reckoning is: 100 + 3 in the car + 53 = 156!! What do you do with all this money?"

(September 11)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

North Korea Shows Two Different Faces

Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan in Tokyo

TWO SHIPS passed in the night earlier this month in the Sea of Japan, bearing the contradictory images of North Korea that confound and exasperate the rest of the world.

On one ship — a bright white ferry steaming toward North Korea from Japan — North Korean officials in suits schmoozed with foreign business executives, trying to land investment in a North Korean free-trade zone. They talked about North Korea as a land of opportunity, a peaceful partner in the global economic community. A friend.

On the other, a submarine slipping through the darkness toward South Korea, well-armed North Korean commandos plotted a spy mission. Their combat rifles and reconnaissance equipment offered no sign of international goodwill, only of testing the defenses of their most bitter enemy.

These conflicting faces of North Korea have always complicated its relationship with the outside world. North Korea remains isolated, obsessively secretive and thoroughly unpredictable — sometimes conciliatory, sometimes belligerent, sometimes both on the same day.

Maybe that would not be a great problem — except that North Korea has a million-man army poised on the border with South Korea, a close U.S. ally that hosts 37,000 U.S. troops.

Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, American troops have been stationed in South Korea to help guard the capitalist southern ally from its communist northern neighbor. Particularly since the end of the Cold War, an increasing number of Americans are asking why American soldiers are in South Korea.

Critics, including Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole, say President Clinton is too soft on North Korea. The administration pursues a policy of engaging Pyongyang, offering incentives for it to drop its militaristic stance. Since April, the Clinton administration has tried to encourage North Korea to join the United States, China, and South Korea in negotiations toward peace on the Korean Peninsula.

"Then they embarrass us; they make it very hard," said one U.S. official in Seoul, responding to the submarine affair. "They owe us some good behavior so we can continue to engage them. Now we're going to have to put any dialogue with them on ice for a while. This was just dumb." The official said Washington is weighing its response to the incident. But he said "We want to send an unmistakable signal to the North that there are costs for this kind of thing."

U.S. Rep. Bill Richardson, D-New Mexico, who has been Clinton's unofficial envoy to North Korea, canceled a trip to Pyongyang scheduled to begin at the weekend because of the submarine incident, the official said.

South Korean President Kim Young Sam has responded to the sub incident with harsh rhetoric, and he is reportedly considering bringing the matter to the United Nations Security Council. Foreign Minister Gong Ro Myung met last week with U.S. Ambassador James Laney to ask for U.S. support on the submarine issue. Gong also is expected to raise the matter with Secretary of State Warren Christopher when they meet in New York this week.

The spy mission, which so far has led to the deaths of 20 North Koreans, with one captured and others believed on the loose, is expected to chill North Korea's efforts to obtain international aid to combat food shortages that reportedly have brought the country close to famine. Until last week, relief agencies appeared to be having some success building international sympathy for North Korea's peasants.

This year the United States has responded with $8 million in food aid, Japan has donated $6 million and South Korea, however reluctantly, added $3 million.

Now a lot of people in South Korea and elsewhere feel as Chung Ok Jin, 62, does. "I feel betrayed," said the janitor in Seoul. "Why do we send them rice? They have not given up their hope of bringing communism to this country. We have to let them collapse. The sooner they collapse, the better."



Soldiers inspect the North Korean submarine that ran aground off South Korea's east coast last week PHOTOGRAPH: AHN YOUNG JOON

The submarine incident, in which engine trouble apparently doomed the spy operation, is one of more than 300 "infiltration" cases since the late 1960s. While this case is far more spectacular than most, it comes as no surprise to those who monitor North Korean activity. As Hajime Izumi, a Korean specialist at Shizuoka University in Japan, said, "North Korea always has two faces on one head."

Many analysts see the conflicting signals from Pyongyang as sign of a worsening economy and of a growing struggle among its elite over how to cope with it.

"As the situation in North Korea deteriorates, it may create more debate, more conflict, among those that want to pursue different courses," said Han Bae Ho, president of the Sejong Institute, a private think tank in Seoul.

Jung Ku Hyun, director of the institute of East & West Studies at Yonsei University in Seoul, agreed. "Perhaps the left arm is trying to run investment seminars and open up the economy while the right arm is doing these stupid infiltrations," Jung said.

North Korea got more bad press last week in Washington. According to testimony at a congressional hearing on prisoners of war from the Korean War, North Korea might have kept more than 900 American POWs after prisoners were exchanged at the end of the war. A former Czech military officer testified North Koreans, under orders from the Soviet Union, practiced amputation surgery and conducted hideous experiments on American prisoners before executing them.

This and the submarine incident have underscored North Korea's volatility and makes an end to the peninsula's dangerous stalemate seem that much more distant.

Abortion Pill Makers Seek Anonymity

Kathleen Day

AS LONG as there's money to be made, U.S. companies have generally put their names on controversial products and suffered whatever fallout resulted. The French abortion pill — in the news because it's nearing final regulatory approval for sale in the United States — is proving a notable exception.

Mention of RU-486, also known as mifepristone, sends mainstream pharmaceutical companies — even the French and German ones that make it for sale in Europe — running in the other direction. And that's despite estimates that put potential sales from the drug in the United States at anywhere from $25 million to $500 million a year.

So a pro-abortion rights group and the Food and Drug Administration are crafting an unprecedented plan aimed at bringing the pill to market with the manufacturer's name remaining secret. Under the plan, the production will be regulated by the FDA, but the maker's name and location of the factory won't appear.

"Companies don't want to be targeted by anti-abortion groups," said Jack Mongoven of Mongoven, Boscoe & Duchin, a Washington-based firm that specializes in helping corporations manage controversial issues or crises.

In years past, advocacy groups have targeted companies for making products of which the groups disapprove — napalm, assault rifles, "gangsta rap" music, to name a few.

Experts say they can't remember a single case in which no company was willing to step forward and make a legal product, in the open.

Not so with RU-486. So a year ago, a not-for-profit company called Advances in Health Technology Inc. was founded in Washington, to be in charge of finding companies to make and distribute the drug. AHT itself is shrouded in secrecy, with its five employees unwilling to disclose its exact location for security reasons.

"We didn't use anyone as a model because there wasn't anyone," said Susan Allen, AHT president and chief executive, speaking of how the new company was created. "We had to do this very creatively because no other pharmaceutical company would do it."

AHT was created by a New York-based nonprofit group, the Population Council, which has exclusive licensing rights to make and sell the drug in the United States.

Under an arrangement brokered by the FDA, the council was given those rights in 1994 by the drug's makers, the chemical and pharmaceutical giant Hoechst AG of Germany and its French affiliate. Hoechst and its affiliate donated the license free of charge at the urging of the government because they had no interest in bringing the pill to market in the United States, said Charles F. Rouse, spokesman for Hoechst Marion Roussel Inc., the North American division of Hoechst.

The companies now sell the pill in Britain, France and Sweden, but felt that the divisiveness of the abortion debate in the United States make this market undesirable, he said.

Hackers Deface CIA World Wide Web Site

John Schwartz

THE SPOOKS got hacked. If you have access to the World Wide Web (the user-friendlier part of the Internet) and try to visit the CIA's home page, you'll receive a message that "The server may be down or unreachable" — Internet-ese for "this thing is messed up."

And messed up it is. Had you tried visiting the site last week before the CIA shut it down, you would have found that the agency's web site had been altered, and obscenely so, apparently by Swedish hackers.

The *real* CIA web page is one of the gems of the on-line world. The Great American Web Book, a guide to government Web sites, calls the CIA's effort "one of the finest educational tools in Uncle Sam's back yard," including the World Factbook, with information on every country in the world, a tour of the agency's headquarters and other fun bells and whistles. It is visited some 120,000 times each week.

The substitute is, well, different. For one thing, it says "Welcome to the Central Stupidity Agency," and what follows is laced with the kind of language one does not see in a family newspaper. And the "links" — which usually allow users to connect with government resources at the click of a mouse — have been replaced with links to Playboy magazine and Net sites maintained by hacker groups.

The security breach was not a serious one, said CIA spokesman Rick Oborn, because the computer that maintains the Web site is a "stand-alone system," separate from the agency's top secret computer systems. "There's no way anybody can hack that page and get into CIA classified files."

Web pages are an increasingly attractive target for hackers because the software is relatively new and still riddled with security holes. Last month hackers defaced the Department of Justice's home page by adding swastikas, obscenities and a photo of Adolf Hitler in a protest against the agency's defense of the Communications Decency Act.

That law, which President Clinton signed in February, would impose criminal penalties for making "indecent" materials available to minors via computer systems. The law, which has been blocked by a federal panel pending action by the Supreme Court, has been attacked as an unconstitutional action that could end up restricting legitimate on-line speech.

Hackers can easily obtain the technical information and skills necessary to break in, said Kevin Poulsen, who spent five years in prison on hacking charges. "The hacker underground has a very good communications network," Poulsen said. "When someone discovers a loophole or a bug, then it quickly circulates, at least among hackers with a comparable level of skill . . . The entire Internet is in an uproar over some agencies' attempts to censor it . . . [But] Once you get into the business of censoring people who say things you don't like . . . then you're acting as bad as the people you're criticizing."

● CIA director John Deutch traveled to Capitol Hill last week to assure members of the Congressional Black Caucus that an independent investigator will pursue allegations that the CIA was instrumental in introducing crack cocaine into black communities in the 1980s. The meeting, which lasted nearly an hour, seemed to satisfy members of the caucus. They said they have been receiving thousands of phone calls and faxes from their constituents on the issue since it was raised in a newspaper series last month.

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Army Instructed Latins on Torture

Dana Priest

U.S. ARMY intelligence manuals that were used to train Latin American military officers at an Army school from 1982-91 advocated executions, torture, blackmail and other forms of coercion against insurgents, Pentagon documents released last week show.

Used in courses at the U.S. Army's School of the Americas, the manual says that to recruit and control informants, counterintelligence agents could use "fear, payment of bounties for enemy dead, beatings, false imprisonment, executions and the use of truth serum," according to a secret Defense Department summary of the manuals compiled during a 1992 investigation of the instructional material and also released last week.

A summary of the investigation and four pages of brief, translated excerpts from the seven Spanish-language manuals were released by the Defense Department, which recently has taken to making controversial information available in the evenings, after the deadlines of the prime-time network television news programs.

The Army School of the Americas, long located in Panama but moved in 1984 to Fort Benning, Georgia, has trained nearly 60,000 military and police officers from Latin America and the United States since 1946.

Its graduates have included some of the region's most notorious human rights abusers, among them Roberto D'Aubuisson, the leader of El Salvador's right-wing death squads; 19 Salvadoran soldiers linked to the 1989 assassination of six Jesuit priests; Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, the deposed Panamanian strongman; six Peruvian officers linked to killings of students and a professor; and Col. Julio Roberto Alpirez, a Guatemalan officer implicated in the death of an American innkeeper living in Guatemala and to the death of a leftist guerrilla married to an American lawyer.

The Defense Department said the school's curriculum now includes mandatory human rights training and that it is an effective way to help promote military professionalism in a region where that concept is still nascent.

"The problem was discovered in 1992, properly reported and fixed," said Lt. Col. Arne Owens, a Pentagon spokesman. "There have been a lot of great changes at the School of the Americas."

When reports of the 1992 investigation surfaced this year during a congressional inquiry into the CIA's activities in Guatemala, spokesmen for the school denied the manuals advocated such extreme methods of operation, which were in violation of Army policy and law at the time they were in use.

The 1992 investigation concluded the inclusion of the methods was the result of bureaucratic oversight. "It is incredible that the use g . . . since 1982 . . . evaded the established system of doctrinal controls," said the report of the investigation, conducted by the office of the assistant to the secretary of defense for intelligence oversight. "Nevertheless, we could find no evidence that this was a deliberate and orchestrated attempt to violate DoD or Army policies."

The manuals were compiled by Army intelligence officials using "outdated instructional material without the required doctrinal approval" from the Army Intelligence School, the investigation report said.

The material was based, in part, on training instructions used in the 1960s by the Army's Foreign Intelligence Assistance Program, entitled "Project X." The 1992 investigation also found the manual was distributed to thousands of military officers from 11 South and Central American countries, including Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Panama, where the U.S. military was heavily involved in counter-insurgency.

One manual, entitled "Handling of Sources," also "discloses classified [informant] methodology that could compromise Army clandestine intelligence *modus operandi*," the 1992 investigation found. Another manual, entitled "Counterintelligence," contained "sensitive Army counterintelligence tactics, techniques and procedures."

The Defense Department last week said the 1992 investigators found two dozen objectionable passages among the 1,169 pages of instruction. For instance, the manual entitled "Handling of Sources" says, "The CI [counterintelligence] agent could cause the arrest of the employees' [informants'] parents, imprison the employee or give him a beating" to coerce cooperation.

On several occasions it uses the words "neutralization" or "neutralizing," which was commonly used at the time as a euphemism for execution or destruction, a Pentagon official said.

The manual on "Terrorism and the Urban Guerrilla" says that "another function of the CI agents is recommending CI targets for neutralizing. The CI targets can include personalities, installations, organizations, documents and materials . . . the personality targets prove to be valuable sources of intelligence. Some examples of these targets are governmental officials, political leaders, and members of the infrastructure."

The Defense Department continues to try to collect the manuals but, as the 1992 investigation noted, "due to incomplete records, retrieval of all copies is doubtful."

Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II, D-Massachusetts, an advocate of closing the school, said in a statement that the manuals "show what we have suspected all along, that taxpayers' money has been used for physical abuse." Kennedy said, "The School of the Americas, a Cold War relic, should be shut down."

Sex, Drugs & . . . The Kids

OPINION

Ellen Goodman

IT IS ONE of those moments when you wish your children were just a touch more repressed, just a teensy-weensy bit more reticent to ask you questions. You're driving to soccer practice when Sean asks, "So Dad, did you and mom sleep together before you were married?" You're leaving the junior high parking lot when Melanie pipes up, "Mom, did you ever smoke marijuana when you were in college?"

Let us assume that you are among the baby boomers who did inhale and/or share prenuptial living quarters. At this point, you have the following options: (1) You can tell the truth. (2) You can lie. (3) You can take the easy way out and drive directly into an embankment.

In any case, you have just experienced one of the ethical crises of modern parenthood. The commitment to openness, sharing, truth and the boomer way has come up against the anxiety that your little tyke may follow in your footsteps — and end up walking off a cliff.

Now add to this anxiety, the survey of boomer parents and their kids just released by the National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse. One of the nuggets is that the children whose parents used drugs and who know about it are more likely to use drugs themselves than children whose parents didn't use them or don't know about it.

This led Frank Luntz, the pollster who conducted the survey, to ponder: "The mere acknowledgment by a parent of having used drugs puts the kids into a more at-risk position. . . That begs a serious moral question which boomer parents will be debating for the next decade: Do you tell them the truth about your own drug use or do you lie?"

Here we go again. Remember back in the late '80s when Rolling Stone did a survey of boomer parents? The conclusion was that they did a lot, regretted little, and wanted their kids to do none of it.

I wondered then about a DNA for parental protectiveness. Is social conservatism a genetic trait that emerges at childbirth? Or does this reflect the realistic fear among boomers that the risks today are greater than in their own youth?

Joe Califano, the president of the center who commissioned the current survey, dismisses any virtue in lying. The link between former and future drug users isn't umbilical. There are enough variables on child drug use to keep a researcher funded for decades.

Parents who tried or used drugs not only think their own kids will, but they are less likely to think they can influence their children or their environment. Those who lived through a time of enormous change have had great difficulty clarifying their values. They've had trouble reconciling their experiences with their parental anxieties.

Being a parent gives you a — gulp — second chance. It forces you to figure it out. Sometimes at leisure. Sometimes under the searching eye of a 12-year-old coming home from soccer. Want to give them Reason 66 For Avoiding Drugs? They don't want to go through this Q-and-A with their kids.

Even Trickier Than Dicky

OBITUARY

Spiro T. Agnew

SPIRO T. AGNEW, who resigned the office of vice president in disgrace in 1973 after pleading no contest to federal income tax evasion, died last week in a hospital near Ocean City, Maryland. He was 77.

In addition to his service as Richard Nixon's first vice president, Agnew had been a Republican governor of Maryland. After leaving the vice presidency, he wrote at least one novel and had worked as an international business consultant.

His resignation from the vice presidency in the face of criminal charges marked the first time in the nation's history that such an event had occurred. It also represented a sort of prelude to the downfall of the Nixon administration in the face of the Watergate scandal, although there was no connection between the incidents that led to each resignation.

The tax charge brought by federal prosecutors against Agnew stemmed from an extensive investigation into allegations of bribery and extortion arising from the time he held state and county office in his native Maryland.

His plea of no contest in a federal courtroom in Baltimore came only 10 months before Nixon himself surrendered the presidency in the face of impeachment proceedings that were prompted by the Watergate burglary and its cover-up.

Agnew was a vigorous campaigner for Republican candidates on the state and local level and also earned a reputation as an articulate and aggressive spokesman for a conservative point of view.

He spoke for law and order, against antiwar demonstrators and on behalf of what was known then as the "silent majority" of Americans who quietly supported traditional society and its values. Among institutions and individuals who felt the sting of his rhetoric were media organizations and individual journalists. He was noted for colorful languages, and once described the media as "nattering nabobs of negativism."

Although he pleaded no contest to the federal charges against him, he later denied that he had committed any crimes.

Agnew was born in Baltimore, the son of a Greek immigrant father and a mother who was a native of Virginia. After attending public schools, he began classes at the University of Baltimore law school, interrupting his studies for World War II Army service as an Armored company commander in Europe. After the war, he completed his degree, moved to Baltimore County and became a Republican, slowly climbing the political ladder.

In 1966, he defeated the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, George Mahoney, in an election in which he was regarded as a progressive.

Nixon chose him as his vice presidential candidate in 1968, and Agnew was again on the national ticket that swept to a landslide victory for a second term in 1972.

Martin Weil

R. H. Melton adds: It was the new politics of Maryland, the friends of Agnew recalled last week, that sent the Greek immigrant's son on a breathtaking rise from lowly suburban Baltimore to the halls of the White House.



Agnew with Nixon at the 1968 Republican convention. The surprising running mate, Agnew took bribes for most of his career

And it was the Free State's old traditions — the ones involving envelopes of cash conveyed quietly to public officeholders — that marked him for political ruin even as he began that remarkable climb to power.

Agnew maintained his principal residence in California, but to those who knew him best he was first and last a Marylander, who summered every year in Ocean City like thousands of other beachgoers in the state. "I think he still considered himself a Marylander," said former governor Marvin Mandel, who played a decisive role in Agnew's capturing the governor's mansion 30 years ago.

Four years earlier, in 1962, the gods of politics smiled for the first time on Spiro Theodore Agnew, when a bitterly divided Democratic Party handed the Republican the keys to the office of Baltimore County executive. Then, in 1966, state Democrats did it again, nominating a gubernatorial candidate many considered so unfit for the office that party leaders like Mandel defected and quietly helped Agnew.

"He was difficult to like," said journalist Frank DeFilippo, a former Mandel aide. "He was a relentlessly middlebrow kind of guy, standoffish. He didn't like to work."

"He was a petty politician," said Blair Lee IV, a Silver Spring developer whose Democrat father became governor after Mandel resigned in his own scandal. "He had the look. He clearly didn't have the integrity . . . He was a little hustler out of Baltimore County who made it to the White House, with no anchor, no mooring, no core."

Spiro Theodore Agnew, lawyer and politician, born November 9, 1918; died September 17, 1996

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How We Lost the Kurdish Game

The U.S. has paid for its half-hearted support of the Iraqi Kurds, writes **Katherine A. Wilkens**

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S military incursion into the Kurdish city of Irbil finally exposed a fundamental truth about the five-year US involvement in northern Iraq: Despite lofty rhetoric from both the Bush and Clinton administrations, the United States never had the will or inclination to act decisively in support of the Iraqi Kurds. Only now is the Clinton administration coming to terms with the consequences of this hollow policy.

The United States has never believed that its strategic interests were at stake in northern Iraq, home to about 3.5 million Kurds. Since the Gulf War in 1991, America's primary goals have been to contain Iraq within its borders and maintain Iraq's territorial integrity. But weeks after the war's end, when Saddam turned his tanks north on rebelling Kurds, US policymakers faced an unanticipated crisis: More than 2 million Iraqi Kurdish refugees began to flee the advancing Iraqi forces and amass along Turkey's southeastern border, presenting Turkish President Turgut Ozal with a serious dilemma.

Turkey, a country fighting its own war against internal Kurdish opponents since 1985, feared that admitting these refugees would create an explosive situation and undermine its efforts to control the 10 million to 15 million Kurds who live in Turkey. As the refugee flow continued, however, a massive humanitarian crisis was in the making and international outrage at Turkey was growing. Ozal sought help from his friend George Bush. The result was Operation Provide Comfort — a US-led effort to create a "security zone" inside northern Iraq where the Kurdish refugees would feel safe to leave Turkey and resettle. This security zone was less a way to ease the suffering of the Kurds than a US effort to assist Turkey — a NATO member and an important partner in the international sanctions effort against Saddam.

Provide Comfort was a short-term humanitarian success story. The US military secured a small area, including Dahuk, one of three major Kurdish urban centers in Iraq. The Bush administration declared that Iraqi ground forces would be prevented from crossing into this area. The United States — along with Britain, France and Turkey — established a "no fly" zone over all Iraqi territory north of the 36th parallel — including the major Kurdish city of Irbil. The refugees returned. Kurdish hopes soared, and so did goodwill toward the United States and its coalition partners. Elections were held in May 1992 and a fledgling Kurdish parliament was put in place. The situation was far from perfect, but given the history of the war-torn region and the long struggle of the Kurdish people, the accomplishments were dramatic.

But the seeds of the recent crisis were already in place. Turkey, having achieved its goal of solving the refugee problem, grew suspicious of the successes of the Iraqi Kurds. A brief period of cooperation in 1992 ended abruptly with the fading political power (and later death) of Turgut Ozal — the one figure willing to contemplate a new relationship between the Turkish government and the Iraqi Kurds. Turkey's new leaders soon initiated a series of high-level meetings with Iran and Syria to coordinate opposition to increasing Kurdish autonomy. Turkey's leaders feared the creation of an independent Kurdish state because they believed it would inflame the nationalist aspirations of their own Kurds — about 20 percent of the Turkish population.

The result was a persistent effort by Turkey to insure that the Kurds stayed weak, poor and divided. International aid was channeled almost entirely through Turkey, providing Turkish leaders with control over the Iraqi Kurds' links to the rest of the world — an arrangement the Turks could now exploit. Turkey repeatedly closed vital border closings, delaying essential supply trucks for weeks at a time.

Sometimes humanitarian workers were refused entry. And the exit of Kurdish officials was closely regulated. For the last five years, Turkish leaders in Ankara — not the United Nations or Washington — had the final word on who would be permitted to enter or leave northern Iraq.

The situation deteriorated in 1993 and 1994. Despite the international efforts on their behalf, the Kurds suffered the effects of a "double embargo" — the one imposed by the United Nations on Iraq (including Kurdish-controlled areas) and Iraq's efforts to prevent assistance and aid workers from flowing north to the Kurds. Saddam controlled access to critical energy sources, such as electricity and oil. As a result, the Kurds were left dependent on the good will of the international community and their neighbors — Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

Kurdish attempts to gain some relief were rebuffed by the UN sanctions committee, which included representatives from Turkey and the United States. When the British indicated some support for a Kurdish request to bring in a mobile oil refinery, the United States refused to consider it. The Clinton administration's position against any partial easing of the sanctions remained firm in the most trivial cases. A project to establish a democracy education center at Irbil University took nearly two years to gain State Department approval. Washington had decided it was okay to protect and feed the Kurds, but it would not facilitate any effort to rebuild their war-torn economy or create institutions of civil society and self-government.

From the start, US policy was crippled by deep contradictions — on the one hand, our commitment to support the Kurds, and on the other, our desire to resist any infringement on Iraq's territorial integrity and to assuage Turkish fears of growing Kurdish autonomy. Unable to reconcile these opposing forces, the Clinton administration did as little as it could when it came to the Kurds.

During the administration's first two years, US assistance to the Kurds was cut nearly in half. The bulk of those funds were provided by Congress at its own initiative. The administration's later requests fell considerably short of earlier funding levels. With the exception of a small direct food program, US aid was dispersed through private voluntary organizations. US policy dictated that none of the assistance be provided directly to the Kurdish authorities.

THE STRAINED situation was furthered complicated by Turkey's escalating war in 1993 and 1994 against the Kurdish Workers Party — the PKK — a militant organization seeking increased autonomy or independence for the Turkish Kurds. Turkey's military took advantage of the United States need to use Turkish air bases as a staging area for the Provide Comfort operation to gain American silence in response to its increasingly violent campaign to "solve" the Kurdish problem in Turkey. Among other things, this effort included frequent and massive Turkish military incursions into northern Iraq (including the so-called "security zone" area) to destroy PKK hamlets there.

Inside Turkey, the army implemented a massive village depopulation program, destroying an estimated 2,000 Kurdish villages since 1993. Provide Comfort slowly became "Provide Cover."

Meanwhile, as the political and economic situation worsened in northern Iraq, so did cooperation between the two major Kurdish factions there — Massoud Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union for Kurdistan (PUK). Access to limited financial resources became a major point of KDP-PUK contention. Barzani, largely in control of the areas bordering Turkey in the northwest, reaped the primary benefit of Ankara's illicit trade with Iraq through "tariffs" on the Turkish truck traffic. Open KDP-PUK fighting broke out in May 1994.

Since then, US efforts to facilitate a cease-fire between the two major Iraqi Kurdish factions is, again, largely a record of lukewarm engagement. The difficult task of brokering a cease-fire was not given high US priority until Saddam's forces were driving toward Irbil last month. The United States acquiesced in the Turkish desire to limit international involvement in this effort — including Turkey's refusal to include British officials in important early meetings with the parties inside Iraq.

Despite our history of providing financial carrots to parties we are coaxing toward peace — in the Middle East, in Cyprus, even in Northern Ireland — Washington brought astonishingly few resources to the table with it in this Kurdish mediation effort. Finally, US leverage was undermined by the growing sense in the region that Washington could live with the Kurdish infighting and did not see it as a major threat to its overall policy toward Iraq. The announcement that Ankara will create a 10-mile Turkish "security zone" in northern Iraq brings the situation full circle. Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller has stated that this zone will enable Turkey to keep the PKK off its borders and act as a buffer against any large Kurdish refugee inflow into Turkey — the primary accomplishments of Operation Provide Comfort. The rest of northern Iraq is now left to the whims of those in power in Tehran, Baghdad and Damascus. The only US ground presence in the region, the Military Coordinating Committee, withdrew from northern Iraq earlier this month. Operation Provide Comfort will soon be overflying largely Turkish and Iraqi/KDP controlled territory. There is no longer any doubt that the "no fly" zone provides no protection against Iraqi ground incursions. Foreign aid workers are fleeing Iraq — as are Kurdish refugees, once again. The Kurdish parties themselves deserve ultimate blame for their factional fighting and the misfortune it has once again brought to the Kurdish people.

IF THE Kurds had been able to maintain a united front, the recent crisis might have been avoided. But this does not absolve the United States of its role in this crisis. The United States put its credibility behind a pledge to protect the Iraqi Kurdish people and then helped perpetuate a situation in which economic and political stability was impossible. US involvement in northern Iraq was intended to be a short-term, stop-gap policy largely to help Turkey and embarrass Saddam. When it became clear that Saddam would be around for some time — and so would the need for Operation Provide Comfort — the US government failed to address the serious shortcomings and contradictions of its policy.

Instead, the United States permitted its involvement in northern Iraq to be guided by Turkey, a country that believes the division of the Kurdish factions is in its interests. The Clinton administration never fully appreciated the threat presented by the growing power vacuum in northern Iraq and the danger that the region might once again become an area of conflict for the Kurds' neighbors — Iran, Syria and Turkey. Over the last six months, they ignored repeated warnings from Kurdish leaders of increased Iranian involvement. As a result, KDP leader Barzani concluded that the future of northern Iraq lay with Saddam, not with the United States, and he moved to establish the alliance with Baghdad that sparked the present crisis.

The cost of this latest Kurdish tragedy was first and foremost humanitarian. An opportunity to improve the lot of these ill-fated people was lost. At the same time, the international community missed an opportunity to prove to the people of Iraq that those that stand up against Saddam Hussein are able to achieve a brighter future. This, more than anything else, might have helped bring about the internal Iraqi revolt against Saddam that US policymakers have long desired. Short-sighted, cautious, status quo policy won out. The victims were US prestige, US policy toward Iraq and the hopes of the Kurdish people.

Kurdistan Democratic Party fighters watch refugees head for Iran after Sulaymaniyah fell earlier this month. Many refugees have now returned PHOTOGRAPH: NURI KAYNAR

Katherine A. Wilkens, a Council on Foreign Relations fellow at the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, is former staff director of the subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Foreign Affairs Committee

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 29 1996

Reality Bites

Marie Arana-Ward

THE LAST THING HE WANTED
By Joan Didion
Knopf. 227pp. $23

ONLY lately have real things begun to happen, Joan Didion declares in the opening line of The Last Thing He Wanted, one stiletto of a thriller. Lately means since 1984. Real means more concrete than the U.S. C-123 that fell from the sky into Nicaragua that summer. Or more noticed than the steady stream of Americans — official and un, gun-toting and non-moving through back jungles of the Caribbean. Real means to be generally accepted as having happened. So much of 1984, you see, never really did.

"It is hard now to call up the particular luridity of 1984," writes Didion, weaving herself into the story as narrator, a device she often employs in her novels. "I want only to give you the period verbatim, the fever of it, the counterfeit machismo of it, the extent to which it was about striking and maintaining a certain kind of sentimental pose. Many people appear to have chosen during this period to identify themselves as something other than what they were, as 'cargo specialists' or as 'aircraft brokers' or as 'rose importers'." Oliver North, Richard Secord, Felix Rodriguez, Manuel Noriega, Ronald Reagan. "You know the context, you remember the names."

Into that murky, unrecorded world, quite by accident, steps Elena McMahon, 40-ish, a refugee from a jewel-studded marriage to a California oil tycoon and long-distance mother to a troubled teen-age daughter. Now a political reporter for The Washington Post, Elena is on the road covering the 1984 presidential campaign when she gets two puzzling voice-mail messages from her aging father in Florida. The first is a brief "Hey" — his signal, as always, to call him back. The second puts her on the next flight to Miami: "Pardon my using your time but I've been trying to call your mother and that [expletive] she lives with refuses to put her on the line." Problem is: Her mother's second husband wouldn't be able to put her on the phone if he wanted to. She's been dead for years.

What Elena knows about her father is minimal: that he has been losing his grip on reality for some time now and that he is a small-time hustler in a thousand fleeting enterprises — a can-do man: "There are more people like Dick McMahon around than you might think, most of them old but still doing a little business, keeping a hand in, an oar in the water, the wolf from the door. They can still line up some jeeps in Shreveport, they can still lay hands on some slots in Beaumont, they can still handle the midnight call from the fellow who needs a couple or three hundred Savage automatic rifles with telescopic sights. . . . They may have trouble sorting out the details of all they once knew but they remember having known it."

What Elena doesn't know about Dick McMahon is this: He has been running guns and ammo to a number of undeclared Central American wars. And he is poised on the brink of his biggest deal yet.

When she gets to his Miami apartment, he seems more frail than ever before, more forgetful. He needs hospitalization. Suffice it to say that daughter does father a very big favor — "the last thing he wanted" — and it involves her trailing about the Caribbean in a baffling nether world of slick-talking con men, nonverbal pilots, double-agent diplomats, eccentric hoteliers, and a mastermind named Max.



"I see her standing in the wet grass off the runway, her arms bare, her sunglasses pushed up into her loose hair, her black shift wrinkled from the flight . . . The man beside her, his head shaved, cutoff jeans slung below his navel, is singing the theme from Bonanza . . . 'Actually I think somebody was supposed to meet me,' she said to the pilot when the man with the shaved head disappeared. . . . 'Looks like somebody didn't give you the full skinny,' the pilot replied."

Didion knits together north, south, history, politics and an irresistible story line: Woman sets out to understand her father and wanders into hell instead. The Last Thing He Wanted is rock-hard and highly burnished, a novel that easily can be read in one sitting. It has an unnostalgic edge that is rare in fiction these days.

Of course Didion is not new to this genre of spare, brittle storytelling. Her novels Play It As It Lays (1970) and Democracy (1984) are reportorial, scrupulously unsentimental tough-gal tales in which character development and transitional mortar-writing-workshop staples — take second seat to a punching-bag rat-a-tat of language and plot.

If Edith Wharton captured her day in richly detailed human portraiture, Joan Didion reflects our time in the starkness of her fictional characters. They are like Picasso line drawings, cool mirrors of a very modern anomie.

But there is something more that becomes apparent in the final pages of Didion's book. For all its macho swagger, The Last Thing He Wanted is a razor-sharp parody of the 20th-century American male novel. This kicked-down, taut little story is — after everything is said and done — profoundly feminine, unabashedly romantic, and elusive as a shiny-winged object over a surreal Nicaraguan summer.

Blind in the Eye of the Nicaraguan Storm

Joanne Omang

DREAMS OF THE HEART: The Autobiography of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of Nicaragua
By Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, with Sonia Cruz de Baltodano and Guido Fernandez.
Simon & Schuster. 352pp. $25

OF ALL the things one could call Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, embattled president of Nicaragua, the one she would like the best is the one that would make her adversaries gag the most: founding mother. Mother of the current struggling democratic state, midwife to its birthing, nanny to its growing pains — all of these would fit her vision of herself as the misunderstood, loving and fierce defender of the quarrelsome "family" that is Nicaragua today.

The Sandinista rebels she once supported and later fought, however, would have other words for her, mostly unprintable. So would the anti-Sandinista politicians who made her a political symbol of unity and were horrified to learn that she actually wanted to bring people together.

However, the book is no feminist manifesto or insider revelation about Nicaragua's modern revolution. On the contrary, it's a cautious bubble of calculated modesty and self-promotion clearly timed for maximum impact on Nicaraguan elections next spring.

Too bad. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro has been in a unique position to watch everything. She was the product of one line of dictators and presidents and married the heir of another, the crusading journalist Pedro Chamorro. She took up his mantle after he was murdered in 1978 by agents of the loathed dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle, changing overnight from invisible wife to national symbol of anti-Somoza resistance. Her husband's martyrdom fired the popular rebellion that brought the Sandinistas' military campaign, by then 17 years old, to triumph the following year.

Violeta presents herself as "custodian of Pedro's dream," a mere agent of destiny. "My metamorphosis," she writes on page one, "was the ultimate result of a series of unyielding acts of defiance against a military dictatorship . . . I was called upon to fulfill the republican dreams of my forefathers."

She was drafted into the first Sandinista governing junta, resigned in impotent protest of the Sandinistas' growing socialism, and presided for the next 10 years over her husband's newspaper, La Prensa, the loudest domestic opposition voice. She watched the rise of the contra anti-Sandinista rebels and the Reagan administration's overt and covert support for them, and when the Sandinistas finally called elections they never dreamed they could lose, she was elected president in 1990.

What a story! However, Violeta apparently has neither the will nor the skill to give us an insightful, inside account. One often wonders, in fact, if she has the information.

The best part of the book details her early life with Pedro, when he was in and out of Somoza's jails. At one point he wrote her a letter from prison that is truly touching: "Tell our children that the fatherland is them and other children like them, and for them we must suffer and sometimes even die."

READERS looking for disclosures about international communist backing for the Sandinistas or U.S. involvement with the contras will be largely disappointed. Daniel Ortega, for example, is just an insecure bully in a black leather jacket. "No one imagined" he and the other leaders would veer so leftward as to construct "a systematic totalitarianism that would make the most atrocious acts of the dictator Somoza pale by comparison."

As a member of the first governing junta, Violeta signed what was put in front of her. Her reports on the anti-Sandinista groups tell us only that they squabbled. Her years at La Prensa appeared to detach her further, and when, still passive, she agreed to run for president as a unity symbol, she broke her leg and had to campaign sitting in the back of a truck.

Throughout, wrenching ideological battles divided her family right down the middle. She tells us how she coped but not enough about how she felt: "In the interests of harmony, I declared all political discussions off-limits in my home." Still, "a woman's experience as a mother makes her uniquely qualified to govern," she says. "I saw my job as bringing harmony and equilibrium back to the Nicaraguan family."

Oncoming election clearly in mind, Violeta takes pains to distance herself from Washington. She admits that "one cannot say that, prior to U.S. involvement, there truly existed a contra force." But in the 1984 CIA mining of Nicaraguan harbors, "Reagan's policies were mistaken and needed to be countered by a diplomatic dialogue that could lead to peace." Still, without the threat of violence, the Sandinistas would never have agreed to elections, she says. These contradictions are standard stuff.

At the end, Violeta admits to "feelings of frustration" over being "undervalued". If she'd been more candid, this book might have remedied that. Maybe when she's out of office she'll tell the full delicious story.

Joanne Omang covered U.S. policy toward Central America for The Washington Post in the 1980s and now writes fiction.

Hardbacks

Non-fiction

Hiding My Candy: The Autobiography of the Lady Chablis, with Theodore Bouloukos (Pocket, $22).

THE Lady Chablis, in case you haven't read John Berendt's Midnight In The Garden Of Good And Evil, is a drag queen with chutzpah. When not performing at gay clubs, she can be found staging such scenes as crashing debutante balls, pretending to know the debs and telling scurrilous stories about them to their flabbergasted elders. Berendt's book, which seems well on its way to becoming an American classic, has made Chablis famous. As he once pointed out to her, "The dresses and the dancing are okay, but your mouth is what's made you popular." This autobiography appears to have plenty of mouth.

The Joy of Writing Sex, by Elizabeth Benedict (Story Press, $16.99).

ELIZABETH BENEDICT is herself a novelist who writes frankly and wittily about sex. The opening of her novel Slow Dancing has her heroine musing that "sleeping with men you didn't care about was an acquired taste and . . . she had acquired it." Sex in fiction, she argues, should be not an end in itself (that's pornography, and it's usually either laughable or numbing) but a way to depict character.

History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past, edited by Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Englehardt (Metropolitan/Henry Holt, $30; pbk, $13.95).

WHEN the Smithsonian Institution decided to exhibit the Enola Gay, the plane that carried the A-bomb that devastated Hiroshima on August 6, 1944, it had no idea of the firestorm it was about to unleash. Curators wanted the exhibit to pose questions about the use of nuclear weapons and the aftermath of Hiroshima; veterans' groups, congressmen and senators decried it as politically correct and anti-American. "Even as historians have seen their influence reach beyond the academy . . . their word has often become contested (and detested) terrain, material for editorialists to condemn, politicians to denounce, and citizens to complain about or protest," write Linenthal and Englehardt. In this collection of essays, historians defend their commitment to "examining cherished national narratives . . . what Americans can and cannot bear to look at or consider at any moment, and why."

Tomorrow's War: The Threat of High-Technology Weapons, by David Shukman (Harcourt Brace, $26)

ELECTROMAGNETIC weapons. "Noise bombs" that incapacitate enemy forces. Electronic eyes that distinguish between friends and enemies. They sound like the gizmos you see exploding on the cinema screen. But Shukman, the BBC's chief European correspondent, cautions that such high-tech weapons are not just found in a Hollywood props department: they're the military wave of the not-so-distant future. Shukman reports: "The arms race has not stopped, it has lurched in new and potentially more dangerous directions."

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 29 1996

Research key to good teaching

Graham Zellick, London's new vice-chancellor, argues that quality research must take precedence over teaching. **John McGinnety** (right) disagrees

IS *TEACHING* undervalued in universities and regarded as a second-rate activity by comparison with research? This was one of the questions mulled over recently by the Council of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, when it met to consider a national strategy for university teaching and learning. Some members supported the premise but I, for one, think it is wrong.

Some academics regard teaching as a tiresome interruption of their research, but most are deeply committed to their teaching duties.

With deteriorating staff/student ratios and less well-prepared students, academic staff have to put more effort into their teaching. They have taken the teaching quality assessments remarkably seriously, showing unconcealed delight when they have scored highly.

This does not suggest universities regard their teaching responsibilities as unimportant. Indeed, the challenge is a very different one: it is to wean academics away from the kind of teaching practices and methods which are so costly of their time.

If we are to preserve research activity, we must find more efficient ways of teaching. The old universities are generally profoundly reluctant to acknowledge that traditional teaching practices cannot be sustained in the face of inexorable reductions in resources.

Although I believe teaching is taken very seriously and is probably done better today than in the past, I have to reject another argument. That is that teaching in universities should enjoy parity of esteem with research; that skill and success in teaching should be rewarded equally with achievements in research; and that universities should develop ways in which teaching ceases to be the poor relation while research is protected and researchers pampered.

Teaching may call for skills, effort, ingenuity and even originality, but to suggest that this can compare to the originality and creativity of first-class research or that it is as important is a fallacy.

Academic staff in the University of London, for example, are primarily committed to the academic enterprise because of their interest and opportunities in research. That is their prime motivation. The highest quality in research is intrinsically more important than the highest quality in teaching.

All of which raises the important question of diversity in higher education. Lip service is frequently paid to this but not in a way that truly addresses the essential issues. There is much diversity across the institutions that make up the higher education system in both the university and college sectors. But there are some implications of a diverse mass higher education system that do not ever seem to be acknowledged.

It is not enough simply to have institutions of different size or subject mix catering for different kinds of students unless you also recognise that a degree from one institution does not have to be the same animal as one from another. Unless we can accept that there will be different kinds of degrees for the different kinds of people entering HE, we shall suppress diversity and imperil academic standards.

London University is certainly diverse, ranging from large multi-faculty colleges across all disciplines to large institutions that do not cover all subjects and much smaller, specialised colleges. The subject spread is equally diverse. Despite this, it is meaningful to have a degree from London and to be a professor of that university regardless of where within the institution that degree has been gained or that appointment held.

The university has recently undergone quite spectacular constitutional and organisational changes and now an institution of international distinction — the London Business School — has applied and been admitted as a full member. That says it all.

The colleges function largely autonomously, with the power to award the university's degrees and appoint its professors and readers; they are directly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council. The university's combined strength is formidable and as a group we are determined to make our voice heard in higher education.

IT *MAY* be right, as Professor Zellick argues, that teaching in the University of London calls for less originality than research does. All universities are committed to the advancement, application and transmission of knowledge, but he is perfectly entitled to say that his own institution gives priority to the first of these three goals.

But it cannot be right that "the highest quality in research is intrinsically more important than the highest quality in teaching". The UK has a crying need to increase the numbers of people entering higher education for the first time and to develop systems within which lifelong learning can flourish.

Undergraduates at the University of East London include some who have disabilities or learning difficulties. They are as able to benefit from higher education as others, and as able to contribute to society subsequently as others, but they have special needs. To provide them, and all our undergraduate students, with a satisfying, high-quality learning experience is a real and important challenge.

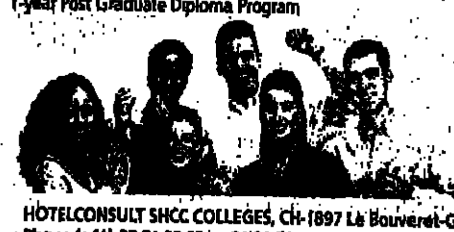
Whole new subjects and curricula have been developed to meet new needs — cultural studies and communication studies, for example. It is fashionable to denigrate these new subjects, just as it was, years ago, to denigrate engineering as a subject worthy of university work. But these are important subjects, popular with students and providing employment possibilities that enhance UK activities.

Universities that take the role of transmission of knowledge seriously must recognise the staff who rise to meet this challenge. Signals are sent, subtly or bluntly, via promotion and recognition systems. If teaching and learning are important and advances difficult to achieve, as I believe they are, then recognition is due to those staff who do these things excellently. At East London, we are appointing readers in educational development as part of this process.

Of course, university work requires more than good teaching. Imparting understanding to students, the defining function of higher education, entails a deeper knowledge of the subjects by the teaching staff; a knowledge that understands the current limits of the subject and where these are advancing. Only through research can new subjects be validated as worthy of academic endeavour. Thus, though each university will have a different balance of priorities among the three roles, all must participate to a considerable extent in each role.

The voice of the University of London should be heard in higher education, but it might listen as well. To have a business school or equivalent within a university is not novel in the academic world; older universities, such as Harvard, and newer ones, such as Manchester, achieved this some time ago. There may be other things, possibly in curriculum design and educational development, to be learned.

Professor John A McGinnety is pro-vice chancellor (academic affairs) of the University of East London





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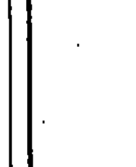
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For further details of any of the above staff vacancies please contact the Appointments Department, ACU, 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF, UK (Internat. tel. +44 171 813 3024 [24 hour answerphone]; fax +44 171 813 3055; e-mail: appts@acu.ac.uk), quoting reference number of post(s). Details will be sent by airmail/first class post. A sample copy of the publication *Appointments in Commonwealth Universities*, including subscription details, is available from the same source.




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Please quote reference number RS155.

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Further details and application forms (returnable by 21 October 1996) are available from the Research Support Unit, University of Wolverhampton, Dudley Campus, Castle View, Dudley DY1 3HR. Tel: 01902 323317. E-mail address In4464@mail.wlv.ac.uk

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The MCH/FP post is based in Tukuyu, some 70km from Mbeya town and involves extensive travel within the region. Key responsibilities include working with district and regional counterparts on health service assessment, the development of management and supervisory capacity for MCH/FP services, and the promotion of mechanisms leading to the development of high quality, integrated health services in government, NGO and private sectors. The successful candidate will work closely with other members of the project team and with local health counterparts. He/she will advise in areas of training, community development, and the service requirements for infrastructure development.

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Post reference: 96/N/011

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Andrea Ezer, Human Resource Officer, Central European University Nádor utca 9 1051 Budapest, Hungary. Tel: 361-327-3000 ext: 2023; Fax: 361-327-3007; e-mail <ezera@ceu.hu>. Candidates will be considered beginning October 20.

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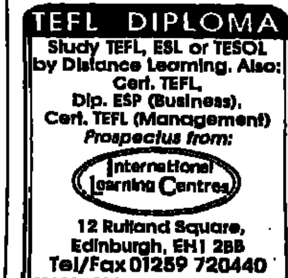
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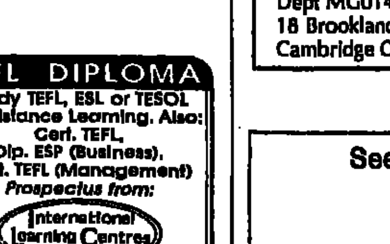
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For further details please send a SAE to:

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PROGRAMME COORDINATOR/ TRAINING ADVISER
(Ref. Moz/6/PC/96)

Based in Lichinga, Niassa province, the post-holder will set up and develop a new capacity-building programme for the staff of local NGOs, CBOs and government. The essential requirements for the post are:

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- minimum 4 years' NGO experience overseas, managing a team of local staff
- experience in identification and design of development programmes
- sound understanding of, and commitment to, participatory development processes/methodologies, including gender
- fluency in Portuguese and English
- ability and willingness to work in an isolated environment

ACORD offers a 2-year contract and competitive benefits package.

Applications from African and women candidates are particularly welcome.

Further details of the post are available on request. Applicants are requested to submit a full CV and covering letter (including details of 3 referees and quoting reference number given above) to: Recruitment Desk, ACORD, Francis House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1DE (Tel + 44 171 828 7611/Fax + 44 171 976 6113/E-mail: acord@gn.apc.org) Closing date for receipt of applications: 18 October. We regret that we are able to respond only to short-listed candidates.

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ACORD, an international NGO consortium (income £10 million p.a., total staff 500) which implements long-term development programmes in 17 African countries, is seeking to appoint a

FINANCE DIRECTOR

to join our international team of 30 staff at our London Secretariat. A key member of the senior management team, the Finance Director is responsible for safeguarding the financial viability of ACORD, advising the Executive Director and trustees on financial matters, and providing an effective financial management service to the organisation as a whole. The Finance Director will lead a team of 4 staff, and is expected to spend 5-8 weeks per year visiting our programmes.

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African and women candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.

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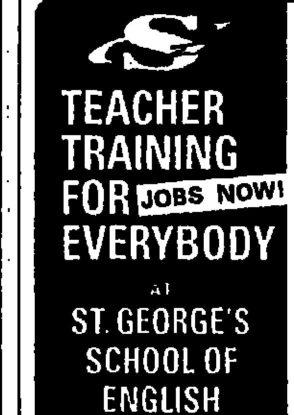
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Women and the priesthood

The case of Bishop Wright is not an isolated one. **Madeleine Bunting** meets the silent partners

CAROL has been in a relationship with a priest for 25 years. The Catholic Church knows nothing of it. Nor is it their business, retorts Carol roundly.

"I don't lie, I just don't tell anyone. But it's not second best. There are a lot of women in the same situation, we enjoy what we have when we have it," says Carol [not her real name].

She has never talked publicly about her relationship but the coverage of the case of Bishop Roderick Wright incensed her.

"I know at least half a dozen women who have been in a similar situation. Some of the priests behave very irresponsibly, and they are then backed up by the Church, which puts all the blame on the 'scarlet woman'. I know one priest who was having affairs with four women at the same time. The Church covers up for these men. It's because of the kind of education they get in seminaries. There are no women around and they don't learn how to relate to women decently."

Carol believes the issue is not about sex but about the men's dishonourable behaviour, and how the Church lets them off the hook.

"These are not scarlet women, they often go to priests for help when they are very vulnerable. These men are abusing them and failing to respect the individual . . . It's all so hypocritical.

"I would like to speak out because I recognise the rights of women in the Church and I think the all-male hierarchy is very anti-women. But I can't; I would destroy something very special with my friend, and it would put him in an impossible position."

In the wake of the extraordinary revelations about Bishop Wright's resignation and 15-year-old son by Joanna Whibley, a string of women have come forward to describe their relationships with priests. Few are as happy as that of Carol.

"There's an enormous difference between those women in an adult, equal relationship and those in an abusive power relationship," said Lala Winkley, of the Catholic Women's Network, who knows of at least 10 women in relationships with priests.

"These men behave quite despicably. They go over the line in comforting women and the women then get doubly hurt. The priest makes promises about leaving the priesthood, and the women live in hope year after year. They are usually dumped in the end."

It's the connivance of the Church hierarchy in this kind of emotional abuse and irresponsibility towards the women and children which infuriates Seven Eleven, a support group for women having relationships with Catholic priests. When an affair is discovered by the hierarchy, the priest is often moved on to another parish, forcibly separating the couple, and he then goes on to develop a new relationship.

"I have spoken to many women, and some have horrendous stories to tell," says Anne Edwards [not her real name] who is, herself, in an "on-off relationship" with a priest, and who set up Seven Eleven in 1993. "I only know of one woman who was well supported by her diocese when the relationship became known. In the vast majority of cases, the reaction has been negative and cruel — some women have been ridiculed when they went to their bishops for help.

"Many priests are completely ill-equipped to deal with women. They might be 40 or 50, but emotionally they're adolescents. I know of women who were touched or kissed by priests when they went to them for help. If doctors or social workers abused their position in this way, there would be recourse to some kind of body and tribunal, but there's no channel at all to make these kind of complaints in the Catholic Church."

Despite Cardinal Basil Hume's insistence that the Church had a responsibility towards the women and children involved in these illicit relationships, the arrangements for pastoral or financial support vary enormously.

Ms Edwards says that many priests are unable or unwilling to provide money — a priest's salary can be as low as £2,500 ($3,900) and rarely exceeds £5,000. In other cases, particularly with religious orders, considerable efforts are sometimes made. One nun involved with a priest was given free housing and an income to ensure that she did not reveal her relationship.

Canon law is clear that a priest who refuses to give up a relationship must be suspended immediately. But many women feel that ultimately the Church is primarily motivated by the desire to hush up any potential scandal.

Typically, priests, if they are repentant, will be moved to another parish or even out of the country. But it is unlikely that anyone in their future parish will know of the previous scandal — the Church does not keep a register of men who have broken their celibacy vows.

More problematic to the Church are the priests who decide they want to give up the priesthood and fulfil their responsibilities to the woman and possible children.



Bishop Wright: sympathy for the fallen priest has turned to anger

One of the first things Pope John Paul II did on becoming Pontiff was to tighten up the procedures for those wanting to be laicised. Now you have virtually to prove you should never have been ordained in the first place; it can take as long as six years.

What has changed markedly in recent years is the response of parishioners, who are often generous and non-judgmental of priests in relationships. In the wake of the horrific child abuse scandals, the response of many parishioners is: "Thank God, it's a woman."

It was noticeable last week how charitable many parishioners and even Church spokesmen were towards Bishop Wright. There was much sympathy for the plight of a man who had fallen in love. All that has changed.

The conclusion is that it is not the breaking of the celibacy vow that angers Catholics, but the irresponsibility of a man who can father and then ignore a child for 15 years and the false promises that have clearly caused Ms Whibley and her son so much suffering.

The historic change, curiously assisted by the scandal of individual cases such as that of Bishop Wright, represents an enormous shift of power within the Catholic Church from the ordained priesthood to the laity. For 1,500 years, priests have been a caste set apart from the laity; celibacy was the most obvious sign of their superiority. This status enabled the all-male hierarchy to build up power over the masses and exert influence in political and economic spheres.

The reforms of Vatican Council II in the early sixties posited a new vision of the Church. Instead of an institution directed by an all-male hierarchy of priests, the Church was the nation of God in which lay and ordained were equal, points out Fr Brendan Callaghan, principal of Heythrop Theological College.

The traditional reverence for the priest as the fount of all authority is disappearing as lay people take on more autonomy, and see their priest as a fallible human being. There is a difficult transition period when the priest has to fulfil both sets of expectations, and it is clear some priests find their task difficult.

Fr Callaghan said: "People place priests on pedestals, and they get hugely upset when they fall off them as in the current scandal — people feel violated. But too much is expected of priests: people want them to be both human and superhuman. They must be affable, approachable but also with no evidence of human weakness. Most priests now feel overburdened by the enormous demands made on them. The only good thing that this scandal can do is make people rethink their expectations of priests."

Additional reporting by Joanna Moorhead

Booty from the Douro includes mint condition gold coins, worth £1.5 million, and carafes

Treasure resurfaces from the ocean deep

A HOARD of gold coins recovered from a treasure ship sunk in a mighty storm, the stuff of a thousand adventure stories, is the centre of a London auction of objects salvaged last year from the bottom of the Bay of Biscay, *writes Maev Kennedy*.

The 10,500 uncirculated Australian sovereigns were only two days from Southampton, at the end of a journey halfway round the world, when the Royal Mail ship Douro sank in a storm inside half an hour with 17 lives lost. The date was April 1, 1882.

Spinks, the London coin dealers, is still cleaning many of the 28,000 coins — worth an estimated £1.5 million — recovered from the ship's bullion locker. They will then go on show before being auctioned on November 20 and 21.

The search for the ship was led by Nigel Pickford, who found a cryptic note written in 1949 by his father. It read "Douro, 1882, £53,000, Bay of Biscay".

After 10 years of research, he located the rusting iron hull 1,500 feet down and approached marine salvage experts Sverker Hallstrom.

The search crew worked around the clock in the summer of 1995 before recovering a porcelain plate featuring the Royal Mail's sea horse insignia.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

ARE there other people who, like the Queen, are Heads of State of more than one country?

THE President of the French Republic is also co-prince of the principality of Andorra (with the Bishop of Urgel in Spain). This dates back to the establishment of Andorra in 1278 by the Bourbon kings of France.— *Anna Maria Maljöf, Paris, France; Bob Hammarberg, Minneapolis, USA; Alasdair Raynham, Singapore, et al*

ONE may infer from the activities of the CIA and American armed forces that the last 10 presidents of the United States have considered themselves to be heads of state of all countries. — *Art Hilgart, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA*

IS MIDNIGHT 12pm or 12am?

EXACTLY an hour after 11 post meridian comes 12 post meridian. As it is dark then, I've always supposed it is midnight. — *Denis Buckley, Darwin, Australia*

BOTH. As is clear from consideration of the literal meanings of am and pm, noon is 12m, while 12am and 12pm have equal claims on midnight. We tend to avoid 12m nowadays from fear that someone may think m stands for midnight, but in avoiding this confusion we have been thrown into worse confusion by trying to determine which of 12am and 12pm to assign to noon and midnight. — *Ron Knight, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA*

WHEN I was in the RAF 50 years ago this problem was solved by defining it out of existence. Working on the 24-hour clock meant that there was no difficulty with midday — 1200 hours — but the Air Force could not countenance 0000 hours for midnight. We were instructed that the Air Force day began at 0001 hours and ended at 2359 hours. The two minutes between were ours to use as we liked. —*James Eedle, Victoria, Australia*

IF IT were possible for a big spaceship to reach the point in the universe where the Big Bang occurred, what would it find?

THE universe has simply expanded since then; everywhere is equally "the point where the Big Bang occurred". With complete accuracy, you can place a plaque on your house: The Big Bang Occurred Here 14,000,000,000 BC (approximately.) — *Chas Simmons, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, USA*

A VERY big paper bag with a split down its side — *Tim Bennett, Wellington, New Zealand*

WHAT was the original cock-and-bull story?

IN STONY Stratford, Buckinghamshire (now part of Milton Keynes), there are two old coaching inns on the main road from London to the north, which were the first overnight stop for coaches leaving London and the last stop for coaches travelling to London. Gossip circulated between the bars of these inns in a version of "Chinese whispers" fuelled by good ale, inevitably ending up completely inaccurate. The inns are called the Cock and the Bull. — *Gyan Mathur, Brussels*

THE original story is at the end of The Life And Opinions Of Tristram Shandy, by Laurence Sterne. The bull is apparently unable to sire a calf. — *Stephen Maybank, Reading, Berkshire*

IS IT possible to gather manna, the food which, according to the Old Testament, saved the Children of Israel from starvation in the wilderness?

YES. In May and June two species of lice extract nitrogen for their grubs from the sap of tamarisk bushes in central Sinai. They excrete the residue overnight as a sugar-rich honeydew which solidifies as it drops on to the desert floor. Herdsmen collect the manna as a sweet delicacy rather than as a staple food. The total harvested is far short of that which would be required to sustain a refugee people — but it *was* a miracle. — *Tom Hennell, Withington, Cheshire*

Any answers?

WHY do air mail envelopes have red and blue stripes around the edges? — *Stuart Britton, Swaythling, Hampshire*

WHO, when and where was the first recorded case of a conscientious objector? — *John Roycroft, London*

WAS there ever a law of "sanctuary"? If so, when did it cease to exist? — *Don Henderson, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. Readers with access to the Internet can respond to Notes & Queries via http://go2.guardian.co.uk/nq/

Letter from Segou Robert Lacville

Rebuilding Mali's pride

ON SEPTEMBER 22 each year Mali celebrates its independence from France in 1960. Amazing to reflect that exactly 200 years ago, when there was no "Mali", Mungo Park was here, at Segou.

The Scottish doctor from Selkirk sailed to The Gambia, stayed for a few months to learn the Mandinka language, then set out on foot to find the Niger river which no European had ever seen. He found it when he reached the capital of the Bambara Kingdom of Segou.

Dr Park had a terrible journey. Segou was at war with Kaarta, Kaarta was at war with Khasso, and all were victims of Moorish raiding parties feeding the slave trade. When a Mauritanian warlord, Ali, caught Park, he starved him and kept him imprisoned in a tiny grass hut. Luckily he aroused the interest of Fabulously Fat Fatima, Chief Wife of Ali-the-Vicious. Maybe Mungo had a roll with her. Anyhow Fatima let Mungo go free, and he staggered on penniless to reach Segou.

Modern Segou has become a bustling city of 250,000 people. The royal palace of King Diarra, who distrusted white men so much that he prevented Mungo Park crossing the river to his city, is in "old Segou", about two miles upstream. I stood on the river bank in the shade of an acacia tree, and tried to imagine what Mungo Park could have seen. Of the palace there remain but a few walls and a piece of the mosque. The river washed away some of the palace; neglect and termites did the rest. Clay buildings are extremely comfortable, but they need regular maintenance. Timbuktu's Friday Mosque was built in mud in 1326, and is still perfect. Every year the walls and roof are re-plastered. The whole male population of Timbuktu turns out . . . recalcitrants receive a mud-plastered head as punishment.

Meanwhile Segou's monuments are falling apart. Near the palace ruins, the tiled tomb of Biton Coulibaly, founder of the Segou Kingdom, is almost illegible. Even sadder than the ruined palace is the decay of the houses in the Somono fishing quarter of "New Segou". Ten years ago, the red-mud walls used to glow in the evening sun. Instead of re-plastering their parents' houses, Segou's youth are defacing them with cement bedrooms. The soft beauty of Segou's waterfront is vanishing. Modern monuments are square concrete fortresses built with Saudi cash by the leaders of local Islamic sects.

Like Southern Baptist missionaries, these Marabouts rise smug and greedy above a struggling population. I don't share the Westerners' fear of "Islamic fundamentalism", for Africa is stronger than Arab Islam or American Christianity.

Segou, "the City of 444 acacias plus One", has seen plenty of fanatical religious imperialists, and survived. The 444 acacia trees survive in the Sahel thanks to their amazingly deep root systems, and their transformation of the leaf into sharp spikes which reduce moisture loss. These spikes can inflict a nasty wound, or pierce a Land-Rover tyre. But this is nothing compared with the "plus One", which refers to the Great Fetish of Segou.

Islam has tried and failed to destroy the Great Fetish. I know no one who is prepared to take the risk of annoying the Great Fetish. We avoid walking down the path where it is rumoured to be kept. We are careful not to offend the Elders who are initiated into the Komo Cult of the Fetish. We show respect for the Ancestors who tended the Fetish, including the nasty King Diarra.

In prosperous modern Segou, who cares about a few old buildings? Are health and education and infant mortality not more important than national heritage? To such questions, I reply that Malian health and education depend in part on the value of history and culture. What is "development" if it has no cultural roots? If Africa's "development" means simply imitating the French or the British, I want no part of it. During my African childhood no one taught African history. Since the colonial era, Africa has begun to write its history. For this alone we need to protect the visible monuments of our past. Cement block bedrooms keep the rain out, but they have no soul.

I try to conjure up the vision of Segou which appeared to Mungo Park 200 years ago. Those elegant palaces and mosques might inspire modern Mali, giving them pride and confidence to build a greater future. And since next year will be a celebration of links between Africa and Scotland, I am going to propose the re-construction of Old Segou as a project for Scotland Africa '97.

If you would like to know about this year of African celebrations and actions in Scotland, write to Emma Burtles, Centre of African Studies, 40 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LL Fax: 0131.650.6535; e-mail: eburtles@afb1.ssc.ed.ac.uk

A Country Diary

J M Thompson

NORTHERN CAPE, South Africa: The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park covers an area of some 3,400 square miles. There are another 7,000 square miles of protected land on the Botswana side of the border, making it one of the largest areas of protected wilderness in Africa.

We saw small groups of wildebeest, eland, springbok and grey duiker, along with the ever-present predators such as Cape fox and silver-backed jackal, but we missed the famous Kalahari lions. In this harsh semi-desert countryside with an unpredictable rainfall, only the hardiest of plants can survive and we saw very few flowers. Many animals in the park depend on plants as a source of moisture and as we drove along the dried-up river beds we came across the tsamma, a creeper that produces a melon-like fruit, and several prickly cucumbers, which as well as fruits have succulent roots — all important sources of water in periods of drought. Bird life was surprisingly rich, with the secretary bird a common sight strutting across the clay pans. But the most obvious were the colonies of social weavers and their huge, many-chambered nests woven into the branches of the camelthorn acacia trees.

Remodelling the faces of a nation

Stuart Millar

IT COST £1.2 million and boasts the country's first see-through gallery. But as soon as it opened last week, Piers Gough's refurbishment of the Victorian and early 20th century rooms at the National Portrait Gallery in London became the centre of a bitter row.

While experts appear to have accepted the architect's visionary idea of hanging the early 20th century portraits on glass walls so that visitors can see both the backs of the pictures on the other side and the people looking at them, critics accuse the gallery of substituting trite aesthetics for historical content.

They are outraged at the number of prominent Britons not represented in the collection. In particular, they have attacked the absence of luminaries such as the critic John Ruskin, the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, and the writers Hilaire Belloc, G K Chesterton and Maurice Baring.

Andrew Saunders, professor of English at Durham university and a writer on English literature, said: "There are pictures of nonentities at the expense of these central figures. It is aesthetically impressive but intellectually minimised . . .

"There are now more people represented in the 30 years since 1960 than in the whole period from 1830 to the turn of the century, yet this was perhaps the most important period in our cultural history."

Peter Funnell, the 19th century curator, said there was not enough space to show everything and some pictures were light sensitive.



The early 20th century room at the National Portrait Gallery in London PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Long and winding Rhodes

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

IT WAS a documentary about an attempt to excavate King Arthur's grave and it had been going on for some time. The diggers were indefatigable but Arthur seemed to have gone away, leaving no forwarding address. As the credits rolled, the critics stood up, their knees going off like pistol shots. Someone woke Jimmy Thomas, who wrote for the Daily Express. "Watch the BBC dig a bloody big hole for £10,000," he said savagely.

If you missed that, you can now watch **Rhodes** (BBC 1) and see the BBC dig another bloody big hole for £10 million. It's inflation, you see.

Rhodes has a magnificent pedigree; but then, so does Prince Charles. Antony Thomas, who wrote it, makes passionate, beautiful films. And there is a bonus. You can usually rely on all hell breaking loose the next morning. After Death Of A Princess I remember saying with the fondness of a parent that Antony had so little sense of balance it was a wonder he could ride a bicycle.

Rhodes, made entirely in South Africa, is a sweeping saga — which is just as well, as it is the dustiest film I have ever seen. This is 1871 and roughneck prospectors are digging holes for diamonds. Dust rises in powdery, drifting clouds, choking the actors and cloaking the action. Sometimes, if the air looks like clearing, there's a dust storm or another shaft collapses.

My secret heart went out to Herbert Rhodes (Tim Dutton), Cecil's brother. Tired of shouting "Gazza!" down his mineshaft at his men, he suddenly said "Sod this!" and disappeared for ever into the far distance and, of course, the dust.

If it is difficult to see what is going on, it isn't easy to hear what is being said either. Alfred Alward (Mark Drewry) is a beetle-browed villain of the grand old school. Not only does he wear a large, black hat but, thwarted, he beats the helpless thing to a pulp. Alf seems to hail from Northern Ireland (something he could do on lung power alone). If there are any awards going for impenetrable accents, he will be slugging it out with Princess Radziwill (Frances Barber), who is Polish and has terrible trouble with her Rs. Given that Zulus communicate in clicks, we are clearly in for a treat, what with Alf roaring, Princess Radziwill gargling, the Zulus clicking and a cast of thousands rhubarbing in the background.

The princess, a femme fatale who is apt to break into frightening arpeggios of laughter, seems an attempt to inject colour and glamour into a tale in which men shout at each other for hours.

The narrative machinery is creaky. The story is told in old-fashioned flashbacks and the princess has an irritating habit of telling Rhodes what he already knows: "In less than 30 years you have painted Africa red" . . . "When you first landed here, Cape Colony was the forgotten end of the earth" . . . "You were not six weeks at the diggings and you were on your own."

Rhodes believed to be born an Englishman is to have won first prize in the lottery of life

Cecil Rhodes is played by Martin Shaw, and the young Rhodes by his son Joe. Rhodes, shrewd and forceful, realised immediately that diamonds are not rare. If you want to keep them expensive and sought-after, you must control and limit the supply. This, I believe, is still how it's done.

Rhodes also believed that to be an Englishman is to have won the lottery of life, and it was his duty, to God and the Queen, to share this good fortune with the world. An admirably Victorian point of view.

We are not as sure about anything as Victorians were about everything. Someone passing George Bernard Shaw in the street asked, "Are you Shaw?" He said, "I'm positive."

It may be that, as Rhodes picks up speed, it will be enjoyable as a rollicking, piratical yarn. It is, however, my experience that the second or the third spoonful of soup tastes exactly like the first.

Talking of soup, at first glance you may have mistaken Rhodes for another cooking series from that chap with the vertical hair. Cookery programmes are spreading like bubonic plague

However, I confess a weakness for Bush Tucker Man, at whose approach everything hops, slithers or scuttles away for dear life, and for **Pie In The Sky** (BBC 1), which has started a new series. This has the excellent Richard Griffiths as Henry Crabbe, a chef-detective. Physically Crabbe is the most implausible policeman since David Jason, and the only living detective to remove his hat in the presence of the corpse. He and Maggie Steed are that rarity, a couple who actually suggest a real marriage. The stories are preposterous. In this episode there was a recipe for brown-bread ice cream. Apparently it's not very nice but you keep pouring rum in until it gets better.

"Gidday!" said Rolf Harris, ambling affably into view. And gidday to you too, sport. The third series of **Animal Hospital** (BBC 1) is the first hint that we are leaving the ghastly desert of summer television.

(Next week ITV has an hour-long documentary on Richard Branson's round-the-world balloon trip. He never left the ground. Col. Gadafy — how one warms to the man — threatened to shoot him down.)

Rolf confided that there been a bit of a drammer. Rescuing a kitten from a tree, the fire brigade cut off the branch it was sitting on. Drammer! Down came bough, kitten and all.

It seems that at this time of year animal refuges overflow with cats and kittens, left to fend for themselves by holidaymakers. One ginger kitten had desolate eyes. It looked like Chris Evans, who had woken up to find it had all been a dream. The money, the girls, *everything*.

Animals and Rolf Harris both behave instinctively on TV. Normally he's a tall wagger but I have seem him put an arm round a grieving owner and weep for a starving dog.

This week we had Barney, the sort of woolly dog you put pyjamas in. Sometimes literally. The vet, squirrelling away in Barney's stomach, said he had found a pair of Thomas the Tank Engine underpants inside the last dog. Alain was a Yorkshire terrier with loose kneecaps, whose owner insisted on addressing him in French ("Assieds-toi, Alain!"). Alain, even with loose kneecaps, stood firm. According to Miss Manners, an expert on etiquette, you should always speak like this to a dog: "Do sit down and make yourself comfortable."

You will be pleased to hear that Duchess, a bull terrier on the brink of death, has found true love, changed her name to Dolly, takes evening primrose oil and — I swear it — is working as a model.

Harold and Alfred Harmsworth were press barons. Harold founded the hospital. Alfred, I suspect, was not an animal lover. He had an aquarium with a pike on one side of a hatch and goldfish on the other. Occasionally he would lift up the hatch.

In the Masai Mara big cats keep the population down by eating small cats. With cries of "Jonathan, you team up with Gavin!" the **Big Cat Diary** (BBC 1) got on the road and immediately bogged down in mud. As this was the dry season, it came as a bit of a blow. "Absolutely bucketing down" . . . "the storm clouds have gathered" . . . "skies have opened" . . . "raging torrent" were a representative range of comments.

Wildebeeste were fording the swollen Mara, thundering, shoving, grunting, very much like the rush hour. Four BBC vehicles were trying to pull each other out of the same quagmire. It's all go in the Masai Mara.

This six-week series is committed to filming each programme immediately before transmission, which does wonders for the adrenalin. The show was at times suicidal ("It's chaos here at the moment") and at others inspirational.

Cold witness of bondage

PHOTOGRAPHY
Adrian Searle

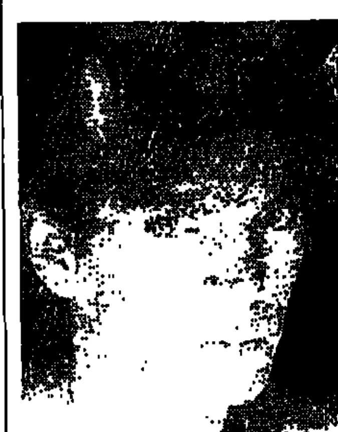
ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE always was a bad boy. The latest exhibition of his work arrives in London in a predictable fanfare of indignation. True to form for the American photographer, who died of Aids in 1989, it runs the gamut from willies to lilies, from portraiture to pornography.

It includes pictures of children — though not the one of Rosie, a young girl with no knickers, at the centre of a recent row over allegedly pornographic imagery. The picture was among 40 left out of the show at the Hayward gallery. The organisers argue that Rosie is not a key work.

The 200-odd works that are exhibited make it clear that, whether Mapplethorpe is photographing a flower in a vase, a battleship on a grey horizon, an erect penis or a society beauty, the same erotic charge is present. This is why his work seems so dangerous.

He was, in many respects, a very conventional photographer, with his coldly glamorous portraits, his sometimes touching, almost sentimental, pictures of children, and his elegantly staged still lives of flowers.

Part of the shock, however, is that these ordinary subjects are captured with the same sexual and aesthetic





Photographic self portrait

charge as his pictures of revolvers and sado-masochistic practices.

Aesthetic taste always has an erotic component, and Mapplethorpe's skill was to condense and reveal it. His pictures of men in bondage gear, lounging incongrously in an elegant flat, or of a man with a huge weight suspended from his testicles, are unsettling. One must ask, too, about the way he depicted black men. As much as the camera seems to subjugate them, to turn them into objects, they assert their independence, stare back at us, refuse our gaze. These pictures are full of ambivalence.

Mapplethorpe once said he was merely a commentator on the madness of our times, but it was a madness which affected his own life. He was too fascinated by his subjects to be seen as merely a witness. "I am looking for perfection in form. I do that with portraits. I do it with cocks. I do it with flowers," he once said. For him, there was perfection even in perversity.

Perhaps we should see him as a symptom as much as a commentator. He throws our liberality into confusion, and our sympathy and desires into doubt. If his work doesn't provoke strong feelings, there's something wrong.

The lady is a champ

JAZZ
John Fordham

"CLOSE enough for jazz" is a well-oiled maxim that says things work best if the edges are a little ragged. It's a principle that Annie Ross, the elegantly Americanised Scots singer only observes according to her own strict definitions.

Though she's always at pains to declare her Scottishness, Ross's speaking voice sounds like Lauren Bacall after a run of late nights. As a singer her combination of meticulous attention to the anatomies of classic songs and a built-in ability to swing like a rhythm section (the product of years of familiarity with some of jazz history's greatest rhythm players, including Count Basie's) made her the most internationally respected jazz vocalist ever to have had a connection with these shores, even including Cleo Laine. But the qualities that have led to this reputation aren't as explicit or easy to define as they were for her famous American vocal contemporaries. They are more impassive and elusive than Ella Fitzgerald's (exuberant innocence), Billie Holiday's (vulnerable sensuality) or Sarah Vaughan's (soulful grandiloquence) and she doesn't take the risks Betty Carter does, by appearing to let audiences into her innermost psychological turmoil.

Ross appeared in Robert Altman's 1993 movie Shortcuts playing the part of a jazz singer, and it was at Altman's insistence that she worked on materials she didn't usually sing. One such was To Hell With Love, a brooding reflection on the price of passion that was a highlight of the opening night of a fortnight run at the Café Royal's Green Room in London. Ross rubbed the point in by the way the drama of the song evolved, from bruised broodiness in twilight at the start (the singer brought her own lighting expert for the season, Dizley Jones) to a frantic assertiveness that rattled the glassware. She inhabited this song in a way that closed the sometimes tantalising gap between where she appears to be and where she really is, but it's a song that's close to a travelling artist's heart.

Annie Ross: meticulous delivery

Annie Ross has an unusual angle on showbusiness for a jazz star, and it suffuses all her songs. She was raised for the stage and began appearing in Hollywood movies as a child. (She became the foster daughter of her singer aunt Ella Logan in California when she was three, decided to sing jazz when she was five on hearing Ella Fitzgerald's A Tisket A Tasket, and Scots comic Jimmy Logan and singer Buddy Logan were close relatives.) Unlike virtually all British jazz artists, she thus grew up with the great stars of the music just around the corner, and wasn't fazed by launching a career on a fifties world stage that already included Fitzgerald, Holiday and Vaughan. She was bright and curious, and she absorbed instrumentalists' methods as if she played a horn herself.

The show I saw last week confirmed that Ross's habits as an actress make her careful with lighting, clothes and stagecraft, and not simply out of compensation for the passing years, but because she's done it all her life.

For all that, she sounded edgy in her opening pieces, though delicately caressed into her stride by an excellent trio featuring three sensitive listeners in pianist Dave Newton, bassist Andy Cleyndert and the veteran drummer Jack Parnell. Don't Get Around Much Anymore was a mixture of purrs turning into growls set against sudden percussive exclamations, turning into a Fitzgerald-like headlong scat. Twisted, her sardonic psychiatrist's-couch narrative set to a famous sax solo by Wardell Gray, was there too, now deeper, and more phlegmatically delivered.

Long after the show, Ms Ross was sitting at the bar with the band, unwinding with a drink. She had introduced herself to the Green Room's support singer, who remarked that it was unusual for the headline act to stay on the premises and converse. "It doesn't make sense to me, that star behaviour," Ross muses. "Friendships help cover the emotional gaps that life on the road causes. But, more important, it's just about being a human being."

Pinter, poet of darkness

THEATRE
Michael Billington

A NEW Pinter play is always an event: doubly so in the case of Ashes To Ashes, which takes place in the re-located Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. A beguiling wrap-around 140-seat space has been created from the Circle of the old Ambassadors in London's West End. In a similar way, Pinter, in this profoundly haunting and disturbing play, builds something new on the foundations of the old.

At first it seems as if we are in familiar Pinter territory. The setting is a comfortable room in a country house. A man, Devlin, relentlessly quizzes a woman, Rebecca, about a former lover. She describes how the lover would force her to kiss his fist and how her body would bend from his pressure on her throat: what is shocking is her submission to this form of sexual brutality. Devlin is impatient for details, but the more possessive he becomes — even finally echoing the lover's physical gesture — the more Rebecca retreats into another world.

Old Pinter buffs will instantly spot the connections: one thinks of Landscape, where a curdled marriage is haunted by the memory of a past lover, or Old Times, where a woman remains triumphantly unknowable. But like many artists in their late work, Pinter colonises new territory without sacrificing the old. Here he allies his fascination with isolation and separateness to his instinctive hatred of barbarism; exploring the apparent link between sexual and political fascism.

Other writers have made the same connection: not least the South African poet Breyten Breytenbach in Letter From Abroad To A Butcher, which asks how the hands that sanction torture can fondle a wife's mysteries. Pinter, with infinite subtlety, interweaves the domestic and the political. Only gradually does Rebecca reveal that her ex-lover was an overseer of oppressive factories and that he tore babies from their mothers' arms. The opening image of the clenched fist slowly expands into a metaphor for Nazism.

Lindsay Duncan as Rebecca in Pinter's mesmeric new play NEIL LIBBERT

But Pinter is not simply exploring the link between sexuality and politics. He also draws a distinction between female resilience and male intransigence: Rebecca undergoes a profound change while Devlin takes on the lineaments of her lover. As Rebecca describes past cruelties, so they come alive in her imagination: as she envisages a woman whose baby was snatched from her arms in an icy street she takes on her identity. Devlin, meanwhile, for all his invocations of God and moral duty, slowly adopts the persona of the fascist lover.

Pinter's plays are not theses that come beribboned with messages: they operate more like poems, through verbal echoes and repetitions. What he is doing in this spellbinding play is offering a distilled image of experience. Is public monstrosity echoed in private behaviour? And is there some quality in women, intimately connected with motherhood, that allows them a greater imaginative empathy with suffering? The word "baby" echoes through the text as if children were the ultimate moral test.

It is not a play that yields up all its meaning at one sitting, but it is a dramatic experience of extraordinary intensity. Pinter is as preoccupied as ever by dreams, memories, the looped nature of time: Rebecca describes how her lover claims that his workers "would follow him over a cliff and into the sea" and then imagines the same image glimpsed through a Dorset garden window. But the mystery of existence is attached to a passionate concern with the cruelties perpetrated in Nazi Germany or modern Bosnia, East Timor or Kurdistan. How, Pinter finally asks, can these things happen?

Every gesture is freighted with meaning. Lindsay Duncan and Stephen Rea begin by occupying, with relative comfort, two capacious armchairs: by the end, in the gathering darkness, even the chairs have become places for huddled retreat. Duncan moves superbly from an English-rose untainted innocence into a locked-off world of torment. Rea, for his part, beautifully captures the needling, dogged, persistent quality of a man who believes that truth lies in semantic definitions. In one sense, the play is a contest between the slippery elusiveness of women and the fact-dominated world of men.

Ashes To Ashes shows Pinter is a radical poet haunted by the mystery of how human beings, capable of the heart's affections, can at the same time license unspeakable evil. It is the same question that lies at the heart of King Lear; and while Pinter no more has the definitive answer than Shakespeare did, he poses it with mesmeric precision.

Demi naked

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

THE last time I saw Demi Moore in the flesh, she was bopping away enthusiastically as Bruce Willis and the Accelerators played a surprise concert during the Berlin Festival. She was, of course, fully clothed, having just completed **Striptease**, in which she often is not.

Just in case you think you are going to see a great deal more than I did in Berlin, I have to remind you that Hollywood is Hollywood and not about to show you a major star entirely in the buff. Carl Hiaasen's book, upon which the movie is based, was never intended to stimulate millions. It was an atmospheric thriller about the Florida underworld, which meant to dispense a certain amount of humour as well as romance. The film doesn't do that very well.

Moore plays a poverty-stricken ex-FBI clerk from whom the courts have plucked her only child after a messy marital conflict, and who badly wants her back. The only way she can see of affording a good lawyer is to work at the Eager Beaver topless bar in Fort Lauderdale, one of those godawful spots we often see in movies where the men drink and lech as the girls gyrate provocatively on stage.

Here she is an instant success, attracting the attention of a dissolute congressman (Burt Reynolds), who keeps inviting her home to dance for him, and the money he offers is silly enough to make her shift uneasily in her underwear.

Meanwhile a nasty murder is committed by the congressman's criminal controllers, and Armand Assante's handsome detective is called in. Now, there's someone she might gladly strip for — if it weren't for the fact that he's a married man.

What the film does best is to show the cameraderie between the girls backstage and to suggest that almost all of the men they come into contact with, except the gentle bouncer, are bums of the first order.

Otherwise, although it gives us a moderately convincing view of the Florida bump-and-grind circuit, the rest of the film is pretty average. Reynolds persistently overplays the comedy, so that the sexually challenged congressman is too much of a figure of fun to be taken seriously.

Marleen Gorris's **Antonia's Line**, which won this year's Oscar for best foreign film, is the story of an independent woman who returns to her introverted home village. Her memories, interwoven with her great-granddaughter's voice, chronicle 50 years of eccentric village life. But Gorris is not a Dutch Fellini, and she hasn't the flair to bring it off.

There are some notable characters, such as café-owner-cum-midwife-cum-undertaker Olga, or the Mad Madonna, who barks at the moon because she can't assuage her love for her neighbour.

Tomas Gutierrez Alea, the Cuban director who died from cancer this year, was never an even director. And **Guantanamera**, his last film — which, like Strawberry And Chocolate, was co-directed by Juan Carlos Tabio — is not an even film.

Set in present-day Cuba, it has a famous singer returning to the town of her birth after a 50-year absence. She dies and gives her niece's bureaucrat husband the chance to test his scheme for transporting corpses round the island.

A cheerful black-marketeer carries the dead singer, closely followed by a truck driven by a macho womaniser who, in between avoiding or being entertained by old lovers, falls for the nicer niece.

This is almost certainly the first Cuban road movie — a gentle satire on a poor but beautiful country that suggests the main problem with Castro's socialism lies in its tendency to sclerotic bureaucracy.

Nice performances from Carlos Cruz and Mirtha Ibarra help things along. But Alea has to be circumspect, and his glancing blows hardly make a knock-out movie.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Freak Like Me, by Jim Rose (Indigo, £6.99)

ROSE writes better than you would expect from a man who pounds six-inch nails up his nose and eats light bulbs for a living. MC and founder of the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow, a gang of artistes with unusual talents (insect-eating, lifting household irons by the nipples, that kind of thing), Jim Rose impressed himself upon my memory by offering to stub my cigarette out on his tongue while I was interviewing him. This, it struck me, was the act not only of a showman but a gentleman, and it is a pity that so many imbeciles assume that he is on a mission to corrupt the nation's morals. In a world whose entertainments are becoming ever more sanitised, Rose is an important corrective. His story is as slick a presentation as his stage patter and I cherish this as a prose souvenir of his act, with a few good on-the-road anecdotes thrown in for good measure.

Native Stones: A Book About Climbing, by David Craig (Pimlico, £10)

"*THE* crags act on us as the moon does on the seas, inert mineral masses exerting their force, leading us to their poles." One feels like saying that a comfy armchair has more gravitational pull on the sane, but this is a splendid apology for climbing over all the sticky-out bits of the earth. Craig (he is virtually called "crag") is an exquisitely stylish writer, enough so to give anyone a rough idea of such pleasures the pastime affords, not only able to quote impressively but to imagine a kind of aesthetics of rock — if you see what I mean.

Brand, by Henrik Ibsen, trs Geoffrey Hill (Penguin Classics, £6.99)

CHRISTOPHER RICKS recently said that he doubted whether there was a living British poet who was regarded as unequivocally great. I hope this was a slip and not a tacit rebuke to the reputation of Geoffrey Hill, whose translation of Ibsen's first masterpiece (uneasily poised, as Hill notes, between tragedy and farce) has become, by this edition's implication, a classic in its own right. Hill points out that it is more a version than a strict translation, but then how, unless we spoke Norwegian, would we know?

Numbers in the Dark, by Italo Calvino, trs Tim Parks (Vintage, £6.99)

A MOPPING-UP of Calvino's uncollected and unpublished stories. They are all remarkable, and one is conscious of the way in which nothing that Calvino wrote seems to stand, self-consciously or not, outside his oeuvre; everything is an addition to his imagination (and such spurts of whimsy as he was given to have always fitted his shorter pieces rather than his novels).



Waiting for the biographers

Ian Thomson

Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett
by James Knowlson
Bloomsbury 872pp £25

Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist
by Anthony Cronin
HarperCollins 600pp £25

IN THE END, for Samuel Beckett, it all boiled down to a question of words. And the fewer the better. Many see him as a theologian of doom. He certainly created a whole gallery of crotchety moribunds — like Hamm, finally alone and silent under his soiled handkerchief, or Estragon, pining for death in a dry climate where "they crucify quick". And reading him is, sometimes, like eavesdropping on a one-way conversation. "You must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on," as The Unnameable mutters.

Yet in spite all of this, his terminal vision was grimly comic, and comedy hovered around the edges of his life. He became a celebrity in 1954 with his play Waiting For Godot — billed in Miami, absurdly, as "the laugh hit of two continents". But this was not far wrong. The novelist Malcolm Lowry described Godot as "one of the most inspired pieces of bloody-mindedness since the Crucifixion". After Beckett won the Nobel Prize in 1969, he received a card from an authentic Monsieur Godot in Paris. I am very sorry, he told Beckett, to have kept you waiting. Not at all, the Irishman wrote back. And thanks for revealing yourself so promptly. Later, Beckett apparently dashed for the exit of an Air France flight when the pilot announced himself as le capitaine Godot. There was comic dread in that name.

Beckett spent the last days of his life in a Paris old-people's home. There were oxygen canisters by his bedside but he smoked cigarillos (in spite of emphysema) and a bottle of Paddy or Bushmills was usually to hand. It seems the ailing writer was quite looking forward to death. He was "having fun", remarked the Irish poet Derek Mahon, who visited Beckett a month before he died in 1989.

An industry has grown around Beckett; inviting herrdoktoring, he has now become the academic's pin-up. It is time to take stock. Beckett told his first biographer, Deidre Bair, that he would neither help nor hinder. Her book came out in 1978. Although it did go on about the Irishman's cysts and boils, Bair's became the template for all future Beckett biographies. Now we have an authorised life. James Knowlson conducted weekly interviews with Beckett over a period of five months and the result is a rich banquet of facts, footnotes and other fizzles. Yet Knowlson is perhaps too adoring of Beckett and verges at times on hagiography.

Anthony Cronin's biography, The Last Modernist, is shorter and better written than Knowlson's, but less authoritative (though good on the Irish background). Knowlson's book is undoubtedly long and detailed — telling us that the hedge where Beckett regularly stopped to urinate (in an Austrian town in the late 1920s) "has now been removed".

Well, we did wonder. Yet Knowlson makes very effective use of the notebooks which Beckett kept in Germany in 1936-37. Discovered in an old trunk after the writer's death, they reveal how he traipsed round German galleries in the bitter cold in search of Old Masters — Masaccios, Giorgiones, del Sartos. It was a 12-month penance that paid off. Knowlson is superb on the painterly influence behind Beckett's theatre. It was apparently Whistler's portrait, "Mother", that shaped the image of the rocking chair and austere old woman in Beckett's perfect late play (or dramaticule) Rockaby.

Neither Knowlson nor Cronin adds a very great deal to Bair's original account and they cover much the same ground: Beckett's psychoanalysis from 1935-36; his exile to France where he became secretary to James Joyce; his courage in the French Resistance and near-arrest by the Gestapo.

Knowlson reveals how impossible Beckett's French wife Suzanne became: egotistical and hostile. And he is frank about the writer's extra-marital affairs. Beckett, in all his variety, is dead. And yet, as his character Malone points out, "the end of a life is always vivifying..."



Man's head (Self-portrait), 1963: Lucian Freud has always taken care in the presentation of his work to the public, and this book (Lucian Freud, edited by Bruce Bernard and Derek Birdsall, Jonathan Cape 360pp, £75) is nothing if not meticulous. More than ever he seems to justify the claim that he is now Britain's greatest living painter

Forever Trevor

Phil Baker

After Rain
by William Trevor
Viking 224pp £16

WILLIAM TREVOR'S subject is nearly always loss, absence, dereliction: whatever word you want to wrap around it, it lies at the centre of almost all of these carefully constructed short stories.

In one, a woman marries the widowed piano tuner she lost to a rival years before. Not content just to change the lino on the floor, she begins re-describing the world the blind piano tuner thinks he knows, erasing the pictures the other woman put in his mind.

In another, a loving old couple prepare the ritual birthday lunch for their son, who in fact hates them — he has always envied their self-contained happiness — and sends his rough-trade boyfriend round with a transparent excuse about being ill. But at the end, even with their gin drunk and their silver stolen, they still have each other and their dignified resignation: "The pain the day had brought would not easily pass... And yet it had to be, since it was part of what was." Irony, you might think, but from the book as a whole you wouldn't be so sure.

It is ambivalent how far this resignation is part of a diagnosis, and how far Trevor draws any consolation from it. His position approaches a kind of connoisseurship of sadness. His remarkable fidelity to melancholy goes beyond the downbeat tendencies of the short-story form itself, with its tendency to end on a "dying fall".

Some of these dozen stories are superb. Trevor is still almost without rival at what he does — but this is not his strongest collection. In several cases, the only thing that saves the heart from being totally wrong is something like self-parody.

All that's missing in this volume, perhaps, is the sorrowful gaiety and sheer idiosyncrasy of his early stories like "The Day We Got Drunk on Cake". But otherwise it is all here: unlived lives in rural Ireland; creepy characters in English suburbs; seedy adulteries; empty days; and the almost cosy sadness that invites you to settle into it like an old armchair.

A child's conjuring tricks

Antonia Logue

Reading in the Dark
by Seamus Deane
Cape 233pp £13.99

ACADEMIC, critic, Field Day activist: Seamus Deane's other hats have almost toppled the reputation garnered by his three collections of poetry. Now he is a novelist too, one that the Booker judges are thought to have noticed.

Reading In The Dark is the narrative of a working-class boy in Derry during the 1950s. As the third child of seven, the boy narrator lives between the relative security of his parents' love and the schismatic consequences of a family secret that makes unwitting hostages of them all. His youth leaves him ill-equipped for the truths which are confessed around him, and in particular the effect they have on his mother, who is linked to the mystery from all sides and all generations.

It is in his depiction of the mother that Deane achieves the novel's most searing portrait: in a novel of tragedies, she seems always the victim, no matter who is the antagonist. The child's need for her understanding is at the book's core, together with the disappearance of Uncle Eddie, some 30 years before.

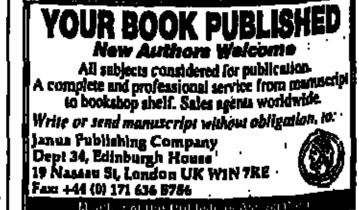
While these events control the plot, tragedy far from defines the tone of the book. The joy of having a child tell a story is the light-footed vigour and naivety of the perspective, and this approach never wavers in its authenticity. Deane makes school a source of great humour, as with the "Spiritual Director" whose armchair chat about the facts of life leaves the boy thinking that God lets people lust in English, but only make love if they can do it in Latin.

The autobiographical element is clear. Deane's narrator, like Deane himself, has brothers called Liam and Eamon and an uncle called Phonsie; he goes to school with classmates called Irwin, Duffy — and Heaney. Yes, that one.

Yet this is also a novel of fairy-tales and fairy children, of demons and exorcisms, cursed lovers and ancient forts, and Deane consistently uses these mythical conjurings to disarm us. When the boy hits a snag with the girl he has quietly been after (in the shape of a boyfriend), Liam tells his brother not to worry, because the soul of the boyfriend's grandmother is still trapped in a window-pane along with the Devil's.

Deane writes with both a measured accumulation of detail and an episcopic descriptiveness. The story of the young sister's illness, for example, is told through a narrative of shoes and ankles, as the boy describes from under the tablecloth the panic of activity, as his mother and father and uncles and aunts move in confusion to get the five-year-old to hospital, all the while aware of the hopelessness of it.

The death, as with many other sequences, displays a disciplined fervour in Deane's writing that is never once threatened by its essential poetic qualities. This is a profoundly emotive and seamlessly structured exploration of loss and regret. It is also funny and (in its portrayal of Derry) authentic. What more could one ask of a book?



Canada's memory bank

Margaret Atwood's new novel tells a slippery story of 19th century murder and madness. She talked to **Mark Abley** in Toronto

WHEN Margaret Atwood walks in to the café, the first thing you see is her wide-brimmed black hat, which serves its wearer less for the purposes of fashion than for camouflage.

Following the death of Robertson Davies last winter, Atwood is — unquestionably — Canada's best-known author. Since her first volume of poetry, The Circle Game, appeared in 1966, she has averaged more than a book a year: novels, short stories, essays, poems and children's books, not to mention her editing of several anthologies.

At 56, Atwood is at the height of her formidable powers. This month sees the appearance of her ninth novel, Alias Grace, a tale of 19th century murder that happens to be rich in contemporary resonance.

Unusually for Atwood, the novel is based on a true story: that of Grace Marks, who emigrated from the north of Ireland to Upper Canada as a 13-year-old girl in 1840. There was all too little grace in her life. Three years later, by now a servant in a wealthy home north of Toronto, she and a stable hand, James McDermott, were arrested for the murder of their employer and his housekeeper (a euphemism for mistress). McDermott was publicly hanged, a fate Grace only just escaped.

Atwood has known about the case for decades. She first came across it in Life In The Clearings, a supposedly factual account of 19th century Canada by Susanna Moodie. Atwood's third poetry collection, The Journals Of Susanna Moodie, includes a poem based on Moodie's visit to the lunatic asylum in Toronto. One of its inhabitants at the time was the notorious — and possibly deranged — Grace Marks.

Fast forward a couple of decades, to Atwood's most recent international book tour. Promoting The Robber Bride, Atwood found herself in a hotel room in Zurich — and the first chapter of Alias Grace came, unbidden, into her head and on to the hotel's notepaper.

After that auspicious beginning, the book caused its share of trouble: "I started a draft and then had a horrible headache on the train to Paris, when I realised I had to throw the whole thing out. This isn't the first time I've had that experience, and it's usually structural — the book had the wrong structure."

No longer convinced of Grace's guilt, Atwood set herself a tough challenge. She hired researchers on both sides of the Atlantic to ferret out information about the case, and promised not to contradict any of the facts they discovered; she would merely fill in the blanks. Luckily, the blanks remained huge. Much of the novel takes place in 1859, when Grace was incarcerated in a women's penitentiary. At the heart of the book are the stories Grace tells to a young doctor, Simon Jordan. But how honestly does she remember and speak?

"When there are crimes of violence," Atwood suggests, "involving both a man and a woman, it usually goes as follows: nobody ever says the man is a nice guy, but opinion often splits about the woman. Either she's the villainous instigator of it all, or else she's a terrified victim and she only did it because she was frightened for her life. That's the pattern with Grace. And there's evidence supporting both sides." The extreme difficulty of finding out what really happened on any given occasion is one of Atwood's long-standing themes.

The Victorian era can serve as a splendid foil for a contemporary novelist's obsessions. "All of this multiple personality and dissociation," Atwood says, "was a feature of 19th century psychology until Freud. It's involved with hypnotism. It's involved with the spiritualists, because they too put people into trances and talked to somebody who did not appear to be the person speaking. The 19th century was obsessed with memory, forgetting, sleepwalking — I read six authors on the subject of somnambulism. Where did Jung get much of his inspiration? Nineteenth century ballet and opera!"

Atwood herself had been immersed in Victorian literature as a student in the early sixties. One of her teachers at the University of Toronto was the great critic Northrop Frye ("It was rather like being watched by a sunflower"). Yet until Alias Grace, she had never set a novel in the 19th century.

Her attraction to the period goes far beyond academic nostalgia. "I could say I grew up in it," Atwood confides, "and indeed that's partly true. My grandmother's house was in rural Nova Scotia, and until the late fifties, it was run the way a small 19th century farmhouse would have been run. There were oil lamps and a wood stove and handmade butter — plus the quilts, of which she had quite a supply." Atwood's father was an entomologist who took his wife and three children to live in a cabin in Canada's northern forests from early spring until late autumn each year. Not until the age of 12 did she spend a full year in school.

Her graduate years in the Boston area helped turn Atwood into a Canadian nationalist. Her fellow students, she has written, had only the vaguest notion that Canada existed. "It was that blank area north of the map where the bad weather came from — but if they thought about it at all, they found it boring. They seemed to want to believe that my father was a mounted policeman and that we lived in igloos." Atwood has a liking for pointed generalisations. "If the national mental illness of the United States is megalomania," she once wrote, "that of Canada is paranoid schizophrenia." Decades later, after fighting numerous battles on behalf of Canadian writers and publishers — not to mention her political struggles against the so-called "free trade" deal with the US — the political Atwood seems more than a little bruised. Quebec's indecisive referendum last October left the fate of her country hanging in the balance.

"I felt very nervous on the night of the referendum," she admits, "I kept running upstairs to read The Lord Of The Rings, because I found it so soothing. You know: the forces of evil, little hobbits, doom on every side, and nevertheless they make it through. Except in Quebec, you weren't always too sure what the forces of evil were."



Under cover . . . In Toronto, where Margaret Atwood is a well known figure, she wears the hat for camouflage

Alias Grace (Bloomsbury, £15.99) can be ordered at the discount price of £11.99 from: Books@The Guardian Weekly

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Those sinking feelings

Lindsay Duguid

Every Man for Himself
by Beryl Bainbridge
Duckworth 224pp £14.99

BERYL BAINBRIDGE sees the Titanic's maiden voyage as a great adventure, straight out of the Illustrated London News, a project grown out of naive Edwardian grandiloquence. In her new novel, she makes the most of its heroic wrong-headedness.

Incompetence is part of the heroism; those who claim that the ship is "unsinkable" are those who use cheap rivets in the hull (as the Liverpudlian stoker, Riley, reveals), and fail to deal with a fire in the coal bunker. In the end, the vast doomed enterprise goes down into legend in a glorious shower of rockets and ice.

Every Man For Himself sets large, tragic events against small, ludicrous ones, and then records — delicately and without any literary flourishes — the ironies that are sparked off by the contact. Bainbridge writes as if there is no looming fate, providing examples of the careless talk which the reader can turn into hubris: "To being alive. To being young, to being lucky enough to be here at such a time," is the toast proposed by one of the group of young blades on board. Generally drunk and much given to ignorant arguments about the might of Germany, they are a wealthy and well-connected gang who revel in the "sublime thermodynamics" of the engines, though, of course, "most of our time was spent thinking about what we might do with women if only we had the chance". Set-piece descriptions, such as the lengthy embarkation of the ship, are brightly illuminated with the full clarity of hindsight.

Elsewhere, the novel describes the very texture of the bliss of ignorance. While the Anglo-American first-class passengers are dining in opulent rooms with doors inlaid with mother-of-pearl, relaxing in the Palm Court, or resting in their Louis XIV staterooms, the men in the holds are working double shifts and collapsing with exhaustion.

Although we get a glimpse of possible causes of the disaster, from Fenian shipbuilders to corrupt shipowners, the novel does not attempt any large-scale conspiracy theory or historical analysis. As always, Bainbridge is interested in the random things which cluster round great events — the Wolsey in the hold; the boxes packed with hair nets and ostrich plumes; Kitty, the airedale, off her food and tied up aft on F deck.

Our narrator is Morgan, connected to the Tafts, Fricks and Vanderbilts through his uncle, J P Morgan, but an orphan and an accidental man without a home.

Morgan is there as a witness to significant moments. He is an amiable, unambitious, somewhat Woosterish figure, good company but a little irritating. Bainbridge is not quite at home with this vacuous, privileged youth; she seems to miss the shabby streets of Liverpool. She does not put a foot wrong, however, once the iceberg has been struck: "... suddenly the room juddered; the lights flickered and Ginsberg's cigarette case, which sat at his elbow, jolted to the floor. It was the sound accompanying the juddering that startled us, a long drawn-out tearing, like a vast length of calico slowly ripping apart." The final pages of the novel, which chronicle the last hours, as the ship goes down, contain some of the best things Bainbridge has done.

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Down to the sea again



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Paul Evans

ON A startlingly bright September weekend, the lure of the sea creates an irresistible force which draws many of us townies to the shores around this inward-looking island. When we get there we go mad. We shed clothes. We join colonies and stake out little territories as if we had proprietorial rights. We splash in the sea, gleefully dodging waves. We build structures, dig holes and scratch signs in the sand that will be washed away by the incoming tide. We gaze wistfully into clumps of seaweed and pluck pebbles and shells from the beach, investing them with jewel-like value which fades the instant we get home. When we go to the seaside we enter another world, where the rules of everyday life no longer apply, a habitat where our own humanity can get the better of us.

There is a theory that our earliest ancestors evolved the upright biped frame and lost body hair because they lived on the coast and would run into the sea when threatened by predators. Today, urban living is the predator and we rush to the sea to escape its poisonous, stress-inducing clutches. The sea may offer us sanctuary, but it also fills us with dread. Unlike the land, which we have moulded for thousands of years, the sea has a wildness which escapes our efforts of domination. What is it about the narrow tidal margin between land and sea which holds such fascination for us?

Just as the way to appreciate New York's Manhattan skyline is to view it across the river from New Jersey, so some of the best views of the Welsh mountains of Snowdonia are to be had from the peninsulas which sweep out into Tremadoc Bay.

The twin horns of sand, Morfa Dyffryn and Morfa Harlech between the Mawddach and Dwryd estuaries, are sandy expanses of new land. Formed by the northward-sweeping littoral drift, these sand bars were not there during the Middle Ages when Harlech castle was built on a cliff as a coastal fortress. Now the castle is miles from the sea and it's the long chain of dunes which are the coast's protectors. Morfa Dyffryn, known as Shell Island, is accessible by a causeway. From Cader Idris to the south along the Rhinogs towering above, to Snowdon in the north and out along the Llyn Peninsula, the huge mountains of northwest Wales wrap the view inland with a majestic, overpowering wall.

On a fine day, when the sea is blue and glassy with rippling waves, only a few sailing dinghies, fishing boats and some intensely irritating jet-skis break the surface. But when the sea cuts up rough, which it often does, these disappear like insects from a pond in a storm. Our sense of landscape is based on surfaces. We take our bearings from fixed points, from which we sense distances and focus on features. But a seascape will not conform to this way of seeing. Even on a calm day, only the horizon seems constant. With its swells and waves there is no surface to the sea. What we see is only the shifting edge of a vast, mysterious depth whose power comes not from the sun, by which we can read landscape, but from the moon which controls its tides.

The sea is like night, inhabited by creatures which belong to dreams. These dream creatures exist in tiny worlds waiting for their universe to return. In waving forests of bladderwrack and sea-lettuce, the hermit crabs, shrimp and tiny fish scuttle and flicker. Jellyfish washed up on the beach are made of an alien substance which is so unlike any form of life on land. Every step on the beach treads on countless fragments of shell secreted by the unfathomable lives of delicate bodies.

We visit this wet and salty world and play at the wild edge which allows us a little madness of our own. But we are soon out of our depth. We know this is where we came from. And we know we can never return.

Chess Leonard Barden

AT THE biennial chess Olympiad in Yerevan, Armenia, this month, the English team are looking for belated revenge for Dubai 1986. Then, England led the Soviet Union by two full points in the 100-nation contest and looked good for gold: Kasparov was diverted by the Fide elections, a USSR grandmaster was in poor form, and the English team was on a roll.

Then came the fateful match, England v Spain, when Spanish players and Soviet trainers were observed in an animated huddle, glancing frequently at the games in progress. Perhaps they were just discussing prospects for a midnight camel excursion, but some English GMs got upset and summoned the arbiter to issue a belated warning — too late for the English who blew their positions and ended with just one draw from four games.

They won back some lost ground in the remaining rounds, and the Russians won gold to English silver by just half a point. Now the feeling is that Yerevan has echoes of Dubai, and that this Olympiad is England's best chance for gold since 1986. England are likely to be seeded behind Russia and, perhaps, Hungary; Karpov is not playing, and the Russians have omitted the experienced Bareev and Khalifman.

The top four English GMs, Short, Adams, Speelman and Sadler, are in good form, while the No 5, Julian Hodgson, after a poor spell, surged back at Amsterdam last month where he was among the leaders throughout. His victim in this entertaining game went on to win the Donner Memorial.

Hodgson v Zuniga

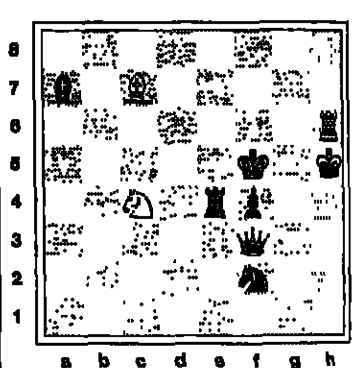
1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5 e6 3 e4 h6 4 Bxf6 Qxf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Qd2 d6 7 a3 Ba5 8 f4 g5 9 Nh3 gxf4 10 Nxf4 c6 11 Bc4?! The Peruvian champion Zuniga's home-spun treatment of Hodgson's favourite Tromp Opening, 2 Bg5, has left the black K-side weak, and 11 Be2! planning Bh5 is even stronger.

d5 12 e5 Qg5 13 Be2 c5 14 b4 cxd4 15 Nb5 Bb6 16 Nd6+ Ke7 17 Nxf7! The knight sacrifice denudes the BK's pawn cover. **Kxf7 18 Bh5+ Kg8 19 0-0 Rh7** This looks clumsy, but Black must plug the g file. **20 Rf3 Rg7 21 Raf1 Nd7** If Nc6 22 Ng6! Qxd2 23 Rf8+ mates.

22 Rg3 d3+ 23 Kh1 Qf5 24 Bg6 Qf8 If Qxe5 25 Nh5. **25 Qxd3 Nxe5 26 Bh7+ Kh8 27 Ng6+ Nxg6 28 Bxg6!** Far stronger than 28 Rxf8+ Nxf8, when Black's three pieces at least equal the WQ. **Qg8 29 Rf6! Bd8 30 Qe3!** A most imaginative final attack.

Bxf6 31 Qxh6+ Rh7 32 Bxh7 Bg7 33 Qh5! Qf8 If Qxh7 34 Qe8+ Qg8 35 Rh3+ leads to mate. **34 Bd3+ Resigns.** If Kg8 35 Qh7+ Kf7 36 Rf3+ Ke7 37 Rxf8 Kxf8 38 h4! and h5-h6 is decisive.

No 2440



White mates in two moves against any defence (by J Kupper). Player and problemist don't usually mix, but the author of this clever two-mover is a Swiss ex-champion who competed with the likes of Fischer and Tal.

No 2439: (c) wins after 1 . . . Qe1! 2 Qd8+ Kc5 3 Qc7+ Kd4 4 Qxf4+ Kc3 and White runs out of checks. (d) d1Q? 2 Qd8+ at best draws, (a) Qd4? 2 Qd8+ Ke5 3 Qg5+ Kd6 4 Qd8+ is perpetual check. Korchnoi chose (b) Qd4? 2 Qd8+ Kc5?? 3 Qc7 mate.

Quick crossword no. 333

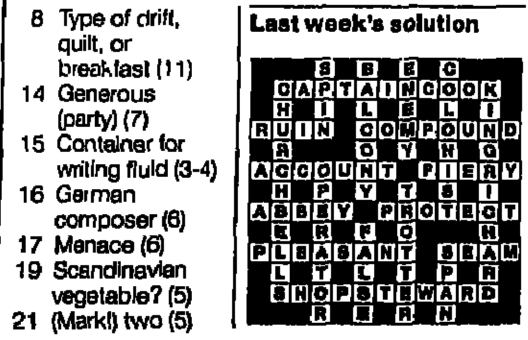
Across

1 Fight (against) (6)
4 Protest — thing! (6)
9 Centre of eruption (7)
10 Frighten off (5)
11 Sound, nasal or of guitar (5)
12 Scene of operations (7)
13 Mississippi sung by . . . (3,3,5)
18 . . . Paul (7)
20 Sailing vessel (5)
22 Quadruped (5)
23 Mean (7)
24 Alloy for joining metal (6)
25 Body orbiting the sun (6)

Down

1 Hole (6)
2 Mediterranean island (5)
3 Alloy (mercury and silver) (7)
5 Move (5)
6 Give the right (7)
7 Bird or country (6)
8 Type of drift, quilt, or breakfast (11)
14 Generous (party) (7)
15 Container for writing fluid (3-4)
16 German composer (6)
17 Menace (6)
19 Scandinavian vegetable? (5)
21 (Mark!) two (5)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

EDDIE is a professional bridge player. He plays the American circuit all year round, hiring himself out at tournaments like the gunslingers of the old West. Some of Eddie's partners, especially at local tournaments, can be of less than expert class — and that's putting it mildly. But Eddie is pleasant to them all, always ready with a helpful smile and a reassuring word.

As you can imagine, Eddie has seen it all, from bids that would be rejected as implausible by a Hammer Horror script-writer to plays that were not precisely what Rodin had in mind when he sculpted The Thinker. So, when a muttering Eddie interrupted my siesta by the pool at a national tournament in Miami, I was ready to listen.

"I pick up a good hand as East," he began.

♠A76 ♥1053 ♦KQ ♣AQ1054

"However, before my partner — whose turn it is to bid — can get out a syllable, South on my left opens 1NT out of turn! My partner is given the option to accept this bid, but she refuses and opens the bidding with a pass. North passes as well, and I have to decide what to do. Since the rules are that South can bid what he likes, but North must pass for the rest of the auction, I decide to open one club rather than 1NT, which is what I'd normally do. It seems to me that South is going to have to guess what to bid, and if he guesses at a high level, I'd like a club lead. Sure enough, South decides to gamble on his partner having a few high cards, so he overcalls with 3NT! I'm happy enough with this, so I pass when it comes round to me.

"Partner leads the jack of spades, making me wonder why I bothered to open one club, but the dummy is a reassuring sight at first glance:

♠95 ♥98642 ♦873 ♣K62

"I win the ace of spades and return the suit. Declarer wins with the king, shrugs his shoulders, and cashes the ace of hearts. When my partner's king falls on this trick, I begin to feel sick, and as the play progresses I feel worse and worse.

"You've probably guessed the full hand for yourself, but you may as well see it all. Of course, once the king of hearts falls under the ace, declarer cashes the queen of spades, then plays four more rounds of hearts ending in the dummy. He next plays ace and another diamond, so I am well and truly endplayed into giving dummy a ninth trick with the king of clubs.

"As if that wasn't enough, declarer makes an overtrick because his jack of diamonds is now good! Not surprisingly, this particular North-South are the only pair in game."

Eddie's voice tailed off as he walked away, still muttering to himself and looking for another shoulder to cry on. ©

	North	
	♠95	
	♥98642	
	♦873	
	♣K62	
West		**East**
♠J10432		♠A76
♥K		♥1053
♦109642		♦KQ
♣98		♣AQ1054
	South	
	♠KQ8	
	♥AQJ7	
	♦AJ5	
	♣J73	

South	West	North	East Eddie
(1NT)	No	No	1♣
3NT!	No	No	No

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Cricket County Championship

Long wait is over for Leicestershire

Mike Selvey at Leicester

IT IS 21 years since Leicestershire won the County Championship for the only previous time in their history. Back then, when they needed only seven points from their last match against Derbyshire, Chris Balderstone, a leading batsman that season, helped them to the target on the second day, drove that evening to Doncaster, scored for the Rovers, then returned to Chesterfield to complete a century.

On Saturday, in front of the largest crowd to attend a championship match at Grace Road in years Leicestershire clinched their second county championship title. With 11 points required, they had all but done the job on the first two days against Middlesex, securing the full bonus points and moving to an invincible position that would have given them a draw at worst, which would be enough.

But during the tea interval news filtered through that Surrey, frustrated by the weather and realising the game was up, had forfeited their first innings against Worcestershire and with it the chance of batting points. It was the equivalent of a boxer not leaving his stool for the final round, rendering the win, by an innings and 74 runs, as irrelevant as it was emphatic.

It took Leicestershire 50 minutes to complete the victory as Middlesex, resuming on 194 for five, capitulated to 248 all out, with David Millns claiming four for 21 from his 5.3 overs to finish with four for 48. Before the players left the field to celebrations of grand prix proportions the Leicestershire captain James Whitaker awarded Darren Maddy his county cap.

It has been a monumental team effort says Whitaker, who earlier this season took charge of a burgeoning side from Nigel Briers and, with skilful man-management, gave them an extra gear.

His side, coached with a nice sense of continuity by Jack Birkenshaw, a member of the 1975 side, have responded to every one of Whitaker's demands. When runs have been needed, someone has scored them; required wickets have duly been taken; the catching has been clinical. And, of course, confidence brings its own rewards.

The captain is back to the thumping batting form that brought him international recognition in his youth, and there has been a mighty all-round season from the big Trinidadian bear Phil Simmons, unquestionably the player of the season. Around this base the youthful vibrancy of Maddy and Ben Smith blossomed. But how else can the resurgence of a Kent reject, Vince Wells, with his double centuries and vital wickets, be explained? Or the revival of Adrian Pierson, whose off-spin had been discarded by Warwickshire?

Backed by the close catching and Paul Nixon's keeping, the pace bowling, led by the bruising miner Millns and the space cadet Mullally, has been decisive.

Millns, once close to England honours before injury let him down, cast those memories aside and thundered down the slope from Hawkesbury Road to take 70-odd wickets while Mullally has, in six Tests, established himself as a rock of reliability for England.

These players all deserve their success. But one will celebrate longest and hardest. The whole of Gordon Parsons's cricket life with Leicestershire and, briefly, Warwickshire has been uphill and into the wind, with a single Benson & Hedges winners' medal in 1985 to show for it.

He would have sacrificed both his right and left arm and bowled with his teeth for the chance to play for England, but was never good enough: at 37 he is the oldest uncapped player left in the game and encapsulates all that is good about county cricket — about unflagging, uncomplaining effort for the sheer joy of playing.

A share of the £60,000 winners' cheque will certainly not go far, but the sheer thrill of trying, trying and finally succeeding will stay with Parsons for ever. Money, as Dickie Bird is often fond of saying, can't buy that.

Scores: Leicestershire 512 (Simmons 142 not out, Whitaker 89). Middlesex 190 (Ramprakash 71, Mullally 4-53) and 248 (Ramprakash 78, Millns 4-48).
Leicestershire won by an innings and 74 runs



Departure point . . . Leicestershire's Phil Simmons, player of the season with 1,000 runs and 60 wickets, celebrates the fall of a Middlesex wicket PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS KINNAIRD

Final table

	P	W	L	D	Bt	Bl	Pts
Leics (7)	17	10	1	6	57	61	**296**
Derbys (14)	17	9	3	5	52	58	**269**
Surrey (12)	17	8	2	7	49	64	**262**
Kent (18)	17	9	2	6	47	52	**261**
Essex (5)	17	8	5	4	58	57	**255**
Yorkshire (8)	17	8	5	4	50	58	**248**
Worcs (10)	17	6	4	7	45	60	**222**
Warwicks (1)	17	7	6	4	39	55	**218**
Middlesex (2)	17	7	6	4	30	59	**213**
Glamorgan (16)	17	6	5	6	50	43	**207**
Somerset (9)	17	5	6	6	38	61	**197**
Sussex (15)	17	6	9	2	36	58	**196**
Gloucs (6)	17	5	7	5	23	59	**177**
Hampshire (13)	17	3	7	7	41	56	**166**
Lancashire (4)	17	2	6	9	49	62	**160**
Northants (3)	17	3	8	6	36	57	**159**
Notts (11)	17	1	9	7	42	52	**131**
Durham (17)	17	0	12	5	22	60	**97**

1995 positions in brackets

Golf Solheim Cup

Europe lose face to face

David Davies at Chepstow

THE rout that had threatened all week, and had been bravely if exhaustingly repulsed, duly came about on Sunday and Europe were swamped by the United States in the final series of singles in the Solheim Cup here at St Pierre.

Some 15,000 people had been attracted to this lovely corner of Monmouthshire by the prospect of Europe's two-point overnight lead being turned into a memorable victory over the Americans. Instead Europe won but a solitary singles match, halved two more and lost the remaining nine.

The final scoreline was 17-11, the six-point losing margin being the same as it had been at The Greenbrier in 1994. And if ever one series of matches showed that a contest was truly a no-contest, it was Sunday's singles.

When Annika Sorenstam, the home side's best player, won her match at the top of the order at 12 o'clock it was already High Noon for Europe. The rest of the scoreboard showed that the US led in eight of the other 11 matches and were all square in the remainder.

Two years ago Europe were level, 5-5, after the fourball and foursomes series, only to lose 13-7. What that showed, and what Sunday's series showed, is that, although lesser players can take comfort in the moral and practical support that a partnership offers, when it comes to the singles and they are out on their own there is no hiding place.

In that situation the best players win, the only danger being complacency. At St Pierre the Americans had most of the best players, with all 12 of them inside the top 21 in the world rankings. Europe had only six, the remaining six ranking from 22 to 97, and they were found out.

Before the matches started there was a lot of brave talk about being able to find "12 great players" for Europe, but though there are undoubtedly some "great" players in Europe, there are not 12, and probably never will be. The men do not have 12 and they have been searching far longer.

Sunday's golf was deeply depressing to European eyes. Sorenstam won well, Kathryn Marshall was unlucky to be two under par and still lose to Val Skinner, and Alison Nicholas was one under when she halved with Kelly Robbins. That half-point meant that the cup was retained by the Americans.

Elsewhere Europe were mostly playing plus-par golf. Laura Davies, with not a single birdie, was two over against Michelle McGann, who also beat her in a play-off for the State Farm Rail Classic this month.

Lisa Hackney was level but lost on the last; Dale Reid was one over, Helen Alfredsson and Lotte Neumann two over, Marie-Laure de Lorenzi and Catrin Nilsmark three over, Joanne Morley four over and Trish Johnson five over — all this on a relatively easy course. It was not nearly good enough.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Maine Road to nowhere

THE crisis at rudderless, managerless Manchester City deepened last week when they were given a 4-1 thrashing in the first leg of their Coca-Cola second-round tie by Lincoln City, a side occupying 18th place in the Third Division.

City had a dream start when Uwe Rösler put them ahead only seconds into the game. But Lincoln equalised half-an-hour later and went ahead just before half-time. Another two goals after the break completed a miserable evening for the Maine Road side.

Second Division Luton Town's Julian James gave his supporters something to celebrate when he scored the only goal of their cup tie at home to Premiership Derby County.

Another Second Division side to spring a surprise were Preston North End. At home to Tottenham Hotspur, they grabbed an equaliser in injury time to give themselves hope for the return leg at White Hart Lane.

Middlesbrough overwhelmed Third Division Hereford 7-0, while Chelsea enjoyed a 4-1 win over Second Division Blackpool. Leeds, where George Graham has replaced Howard Wilkinson as manager, drew 2-2 with Third Division Darlington, and Everton finished 1-1 with York City, also of the Second Division.

Elsewhere, Stockport County, from the Second Division, surprised Sheffield United with a 2-1 victory over them, Blackburn Rovers beat Brentford of the Second Division 2-1 and Crystal Palace overcame Bury 3-1. There were also victories for Charlton, Wimbledon, Southampton and Sunderland. Several of the ties ended in draws.

In the Scottish Coca-Cola Cup fourth round, Rangers beat Hibernian 4-0, Dundee triumphed over Aberdeen 2-1, Dunfermline defeated Partick 2-0 and Hearts disposed of Celtic 1-0. In the semi-finals, Dunfermline will meet Rangers, while Hearts take on Dundee.

THE return of the Tour de France hero Miguel Indurain to the Tour of Spain after a five-year absence turned sour on the 13th stage when he slid out in mid-race rather than take on the most important climb of the event, the nine-mile ascent to the Covadonga lakes. He claimed later to have been suffering from a cold.

Chris Boardman outclassed an illustrious field to win the Grand Prix des Nations at Lac du Madine in eastern France. The world one-hour record holder left Bjarne Riis, the Tour de France winner, trailing by an impressive 4min 51sec in the 70km time trial, with the world road champion Abraham Olano third, a further 20 seconds adrift.

BRITAIN'S tennis stars completed a 5-0 demolition job on Egypt in the Euro-African zone of the Davis Cup in Cairo to gain promotion to Group One. Victory was clinched when Neil Broad and Mark Petchey won the doubles rubber against Tamar El Sawy and Amr Ghoneim 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4. Earlier, Greg Rusedski beat El Sawy 6-2, 6-4, 7-5 and Tim Henman (below) defeated Ghoneim 6-0, 6-4, 7-5. In the reverse singles, Henman triumphed over El Sawy 6-7, 6-2, 6-2 while Rusedski overcame Ghoneim 6-4, 6-2.

RALF SCHUMACHER, younger brother of Michael, has signed a three-year contract with Jordan-Peugeot. "He has an abundance of raw talent, speed and commitment," said the team owner Eddie Jordan, who gave Michael his Formula One debut in 1991.

WIGAN have signed the former junior New Zealand Rugby League forward Stuart Lester, aged 21, from Auckland Warriors on a three-year contract.

TO PLAY Test cricket for England is an honour, and to play once is a singular honour. Now cricketers who have done just that have launched One Cap Wonders Club. Hampshire's captain, John Stephenson, whose brainchild the club is, said at the inaugural dinner: "There are over 80 cricketers who have played just once for England, and 19 of them are still living. It's the only club I can think of which everyone wants to belong to but, as soon as they do, they want to lose their membership. I would certainly be happy to relinquish my card."